

## **Homily For the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe - Year A St. Peter's Sunday 9:30/11:30/5:00 Masses - November 26, 2023**

**Ezek. 34:11-12,15-17** "I will rescue my sheep from all the places to which they have been scattered."

**Psalms 23:1-6** "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

**1 Cor. 15:20-28** "The last enemy to be destroyed is death, so that God may be all in all."

**Matt. 25:31-46** "He will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats."

### **What An Unusual King**

#### **Introduction**

Happy Black Friday everyone. I know, it's not Friday. It's Sunday. But, for some reason, Black Friday is a whole month of Fridays. It's a time when we are encouraged to think about the many things that we want. The Christian message is that, no matter how much or how little we have or think we should have, God will give us the fullness of joy to fill our hearts, something no door crasher can give us. There is no need to crash the doors of the kingdom of heaven. We will not get in by violence but by love. That's the password. That's the answer to the skill testing question.

On this last Sunday of the liturgical year we celebrate that Jesus is our king. What does that mean? In between the two world wars of the 20th Century, the atheistic powers of communism and fascism were leading the world against a religious way of looking at the world. Pope Pius XI introduced this feast to make the statement that, even if a country stops being Christian, and even when devotion to Christ is discouraged or outlawed, Christ is still our King. Government leaders can't change that.

Christ the King Sunday, at the end of Ordinary Time, just before Advent, celebrates the authority of Christ as King and Lord of the cosmos. We celebrate the full and final triumph and return of the one through whom the entire universe was created, and by whom it will be completely remade.

Jesus began his public ministry with the proclamation that the kingdom of God is at hand. At the Last Supper, the conclusion of his earthly ministry, he declared: I will not drink the fruit of the vine again until that day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom. Brothers and sisters in Christ, that kingdom is in the future, to be sure, but it is also here with us now. Imagine a king who is a shepherd, a warrior, a judge, and a servant. Jesus is all those things.

## **Authority**

I once knew someone who said, I don't use the word 'Lord' for God. I don't want to give someone power over me. It makes me feel vulnerable, like I'm not in control of my own life. Typically, we mistrust authority, even legitimate authority. We want to protect ourselves from unjust authority. But we also mistrust authority out of pride, resenting any power over us. In ancient Israel, kings were supposed to reflect the authority of God, not their own authority.

Can we trust God? The God who takes on our flesh, Jesus Christ, says to his Father in the garden: Not my will be done, but yours. Then he goes out and gives his entire self, his body and blood, for love of humanity. That doesn't sound like most rulers of the world. But it does sound like an authority we can trust and follow.

## **Shepherds and Sheep**

David, the first king of the dynasty, was a shepherd. A good king was often referred to as a shepherd. The history of salvation in the Bible is full of shepherds. All of the patriarchs were shepherds. Both boys and girls were shepherds. Rachel was tending her father's sheep when she met Jacob at a well. David was caring for his father's sheep when he got the call to defeat Goliath and the enemies of Israel. Shepherds got the call from an angel and were the first to see the new born Jesus, saviour of the world.

Shepherds found pastures for the sheep to eat, and wells or pools for drink. They protected them against animals of prey and against bad weather. They went out looking for the strays and fixed their injuries. They kept perfect order, harmony and unity in the flock.

## **Psalm**

The 23rd psalm is about the God who does all of those things for his people: "The Lord is my Shepherd." This was a song of trust in the Shepherd's care. "There is nothing I shall want."

## **Ezekiel**

The ancient prophet, Ezekiel, describes the shepherd particularly as the one who gathers the scattered and the lost. Back then, it was those returning to Jerusalem after it had been destroyed and after they had spent many years in captivity. So, God was almost literally gathering the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I will shepherd them because their kings are not doing it. Need the prophecy to understand the New Testament.

## **Matthew**

But Jesus came to gather on a much bigger scale. He came to gather all of God's children, in all of the nations of the world, who have wandered away from truth and goodness. He is the shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes looking for the one. He is the one who has joy at the single sinner who returns.

That's where we come in. We are the lost because, on our own, we are way too attracted to selfish interests, to pride, lust, envy and anger and to Black Friday specials on appliances and electronics. If we can't see ourselves as lost, we won't be able to hear the shepherd's voice calling us together and asking us to care for each other. Disciples scattered like sheep when he was arrested. But after his resurrection he says to Peter: Feed my lambs, feed my sheep. That is still what Jesus does in the Church today.

## **Love Commandment**

He has won his kingship not by power, but by love. Jesus made it pretty clear. There are two commandments. Love God. Love your neighbour. We know that some kill in the tragically misguided belief that it is for God. But Christ is a king who does not kill anyone. On the contrary, he dies for everyone. He does not spill

the blood of anyone. He sheds his blood for all. He does not sacrifice anyone, he sacrifices himself for his servants whom he calls friends. What an unusual king.

Jesus Christ entered into the middle of our need. He experienced the worst of everything we experience: rejection, physical pain and mental anguish. He stood between us and the ultimate dark valley, hell itself, and took the blows of hatred on himself. What an unusual king. He's a shepherd but a king. He is gentle as a lamb with the hurting but he is fierce with those who will not love.

The Gospel passage today is a dramatic reminder that how we follow that second great commandment will determine whether we live forever with the shepherd king. Martin Luther King Jr referred to them as: The least, the lost, the last and the lonely. The ancient king of Israel was also in charge of the judges. Jesus will judge all nations. At the end of our lives and at the end of time, Christ will judge all of us. We are so lucky to have a judge like this because he is a judge who loves us. He is like a teacher who tells us there will be an exam, then gives us the questions and the answers. We don't have to cheat.

### **Call To Conversion**

We teach the children how to receive communion. By making a throne of our hands. Can we trust God to be our king, to make a throne for him in our hearts? The God who takes on our flesh, Jesus Christ, says to his Father in the garden: Not my will be done, but yours. Then he goes out and gives his entire self, his body and blood, for love of humanity. That doesn't sound like most rulers of the world. But it does sound like an authority we can trust and follow. What an unusual king.

You did it to me. The great modern saint, Teresa, shows all of these things clearly. When we do good to anyone, we are doing it to Jesus. Every act of charity we do, we do it to the very Christ: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

Jesus shows us that the meaning of kingship is serving others. He washed the disciples' feet. Then, from a very uncomfortable throne, the Cross, he forgave those who hated him. On the Cross there was an inscription that said "Jesus the Nazarean, the King of the Jews." What an unusual king.

I need to look at all the areas of my life that I have not given over to the kingship of Jesus. Bishop Barron says that if we can't say that Jesus is my life, we are kind of playing at Christianity and not taking it seriously. We are not treating him as the king.

If we only let him into one or two rooms of our house, then he is not our king. Or sequester him in a corner of my life or our society then he is not our king. He is just the ruler of a far away land but not our land. If I give one part of my life but I am unkind or angry or lustful. If he is my best friend but I only talk to him once in awhile. Sunday is a day that belongs to him. Do I honour him that day?

He knows what everyone has been doing. We don't seem to mind telling our children that Santa Clause sees you when you are sleeping/awake/good/bad. Jesus is not spying on us like that. He knows our hearts. He knows whether we are trying.

We are the servants of this shepherd king. Did I follow the command of the king today. Did I feed the hungry i.e. those who need food or attention, are thirsty for kindness, strangers dying on the inside?

Today we give praise and honour and glory to the one who has been given dominion over all things, yet offers himself as a sacrifice for all. Let us not allow this day to pass without making him Lord and king of our hearts, our lives, our actions. Yes, he is a strange and unusual king. But don't you want a king like that in your life? I do. Now we just have to go out and act like we do.

## **Key Verses Today**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *How worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honour. To him belong glory and power for ever and ever.*

**Collect:** *Almighty ever living God, whose will is to restore all things in your Son, the king of the universe, grant that the whole creation may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.*

**Ezekiel:** *Thus says the Lord: As a shepherd seeks out his flock, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered. I myself will be the shepherd ... seek the lost and bring back the strayed, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. As for you, my flock, I shall judge between one sheep and another.*

**Psalms:** *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul ... Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord.*

**1 Corinthians:** *Brothers and Sisters, Christ has been raised from the dead... for since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a man. For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ, the first fruits, then those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death ... so that God may be all in all.*

**Matthew:** *Jesus said to his disciples: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats ... Then the king will say to those at his right hand: Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me. Then he will say to those at his left hand: You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels ... Then they will answer: Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you? Then he will answer them: Truly, I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment but the righteous into eternal life.*