



FAITH CIRCLES

WEEKLY SMALL GROUP CATECHESIS

CHRIST THE KING • YEAR A

SUNDAY GOSPEL

Judged on Love & Service

MATTHEW 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you;



Jesus separating people at the Last Judgment by Fra Angelico

or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger

and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me." Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me." And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.' ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



Today's liturgy invites us to fix our gaze on Christ, the King of the Universe. The beautiful prayer of the Preface reminds us that his kingdom is "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace". The readings we have listened to show us how Jesus established his kingdom;

how he brings it about in history; and what he now asks of us.

First, how Jesus brought about his kingdom: he did so through his closeness and tenderness towards us. He is the Shepherd, of whom the Prophet Ezekiel spoke who shows the care and love that the Shepherd has for his flock: to search, to look over, to gather the dispersed, to lead into pasture, to bring to rest, to seek the lost sheep, to lead back the confused, to bandage the wounded, to heal the sick, to take care of, to pasture. All of

these are fulfilled in Jesus Christ: he is truly the "great Shepherd of the sheep and the protector of our souls".

The Gospel teaches what Jesus' kingdom requires of us: it reminds us that closeness and tenderness are the rule of life for us also, and that on this basis we will be judged. This is how we will be judged: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked

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and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

The starting point of salvation is not the confession of the sovereignty of Christ, but rather the imitation of Jesus’ works of mercy through which he brought about his kingdom. The one who accomplishes these works shows that he has welcomed Christ’s sovereignty, because he has opened his heart to God’s charity. In the twilight of life we will be judged on our love for, closeness to and tenderness towards our brothers and sisters. Upon this will depend our entry into, or exclusion from, the kingdom of God:

our belonging to the one side or the other. Through his victory, Jesus has opened to us his kingdom. But it is for us to enter into it, beginning with our life now – his kingdom begins now – by being close in concrete ways to our brothers and sisters who ask for bread, clothing, acceptance, solidarity, catechesis. If we truly love them, we will be willing to share with them what is most precious to us, Jesus himself and his Gospel.

At the beginning of November we celebrated All Saints Day. Each in his or her own way served the kingdom of God, of which they became heirs, precisely through works of generous devotion to God and their brothers and sisters. They responded with

extraordinary creativity to the commandment of love of God and neighbour. They dedicated themselves, without holding back, to serving the least and assisting the destitute, sick, elderly and pilgrims. Their preference for the smallest and poorest was the reflection and measure of their unconditional love of God. In fact, they sought and discovered love in a strong and personal relationship with God, from whence springs forth true love for one’s neighbour. In the hour of judgement, therefore, they heard that tender invitation: “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. Pope Francis reminds us that “these works” are evidence of a relationship with Christ because they are in fact done for Christ through our earthly brothers and sisters. In your experience, how are these works different from humanitarian efforts we see in the world?
2. Jesus gives us many examples (clothing the naked etc). If we think of these as pointing to more than their literal meaning, for example, Jesus saying he is the living water from which there will be no more thirst, how might we be called to help our neighbours?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for Each Other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them.

Response: *Lord, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Reflect: Who is the thirsty in your life? Who is the hungry? Who is the broken? Who is the prisoner? Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to see the physical and spiritual needs of those around you.

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are the living water – lead us to the thirsty, so they might drink. You are bread sent from Heaven – lead us to the hungry, so they might eat. You call us sons and daughters of the Father – lead us to the naked, so they might be clothed in your dignity. You set the prisoners free – lead us to the imprisoned, so they might know your true freedom. Amen.