

Cycle A 34th or Last Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

Reading I, Ez 34:11-12, 15-17

Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy, shepherding them rightly. As for you, my sheep, says the Lord GOD, I will judge between one sheep and another, between rams and goats.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Reading II, 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28

Brothers and sisters: Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through man, the resurrection of the dead came also through man. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, but each one in proper order: Christ the firstfruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has destroyed every sovereignty 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. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

Gospel, Mt 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who 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 drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Today is the last Sunday of the Church year. Next week we will begin the new year starting with Advent, our waiting for the birth of Jesus into the world. On this last Sunday of the year, the Church celebrates the feast of Christ the King: We know from Scripture that from the beginning God continually sought out his people, inviting them into a covenant relationship. But people of different generations sometimes remembered and sometimes forgot God's love. The ones who forgot it filled their lives with other gods and idols that seemed more attractive. Although death and sorrow and sin had been on the rampage, Christ brought light and peace and wholeness into the world. The Gospel today, in a parable, tells us who will receive this light and peace. It says that not everyone will be among God's beloved herd of sheep. Some people will be goats instead.

How do we know which we are? The standard is very clear. Have we cared for the hungry? Have we given water to the thirsty? What about welcoming the stranger, and giving clothes to those with none and what about visiting people in a hospital or prison? This is what Jesus did in his life on earth. And, these are the loving ministries that he has entrusted to us who are his body. If we have joined this group, then we are one of the sheep who have received Christ's love and who are very grateful. But if not, if we insist on being goats, we should not be surprised at the end of time when God says, "You never did pass on to others the care I gave to you. You did not let me into your life. If you had, your gratitude would have prompted you to care for others! I would love to shepherd you even now, but all I can do is affirm the choice you have made with your life. You have chosen to live without me, your God, and I will respect your choice." This is how a King acts. He respects and honors his subjects' needs and desires.

Like Jesus, our identity is not found in what we do for ourselves, it is found in what we do for others. As He said in today's Gospel, "...*whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.*" And just as Jesus touched people, we have the opportunity to touch others through the ministries of this parish like the Giving Tree that with your generosity will provide over 1200 people with a gift this Christmas. I am quite sure that every time Jesus

was called on for help He didn't find the timing to be completely convenient. If there was a need, He addressed it regardless of timing, and we are now called to do the same.

Last week I was in Haiti with 3 of our fellow parishioners: Deacon Bill, Cullen Larson and Anne Alexander. I would like to share a few experiences with you. When you land in Port-au-Prince, what you see can overwhelm you: men clamoring for a handout, dirty roads and dented trucks, trash everywhere, run down huts...in a word, hopeless. But, that impression is very misleading. When you get out into Hinche and then to Bassin-Zim for several days, you start to see the people are really quite industrious. They work incredibly hard against devastating odds. And in spite of all this, you meet very quiet, patient and actually joyful people. When I wondered how they did it, I began to recognize how they live stewardship and truly maximize the few resources that they have to work with.

Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Fatima is a truly joy filled experience that is full of singing. But at the offertory they did something I never saw before. The ushers stayed at the altar each holding a box that had a slit in the top. Most of the people came forward to put an offering in the box. Individually I knew that they didn't have much to give, but it was that most people gave something that I found amazing. That's what stewardship is all about.

Over the course of the 5 days we were in Haiti we discovered that our interpreter, Berry Riche, had one more year left to finish college. We were all struck with how gifted he was in languages and what a hard working young man of 22 he was. Deacon Bill and I told Father Meres that we wanted to do something more than just give Berry a \$1000 to complete college. We wanted to invest in him, and maybe others, so the community of Bassin-Zim would get the benefit of their knowledge. Father Meres liked the idea, so we are forming a scholarship fund with Berry as the first among many future students to receive our support. If anyone wants to contribute to the Haiti Mission including the scholarship fund, please see me after Mass. This is what stewardship is all about.

Finally, I want to tell you about a 19 year old young man we met named Kasly. We recognized him from daily 5:30AM Mass as a member of the choir and a drum player. Kasly lives by himself during the week and on weekends his brother stays with him. Father Meres told us that he hired Kasly to collect rocks from the fields around Bassin-Zim for the foundation of the new parish hall we are helping to build. It was the 1st paying job he ever had and he was extremely proud of the contribution he was making. You see Kasly is blind, but he is still a grateful steward of the gifts God has given him. You should have seen his smile when I said I was going to tell the people of St. Brendan's about him. And, I told him we would get him a new drum.



“Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.'”

Never doubt that through our stewardship, Christ the King is changing the world.