

## Homily for Christ the King of the Universe

It is hard to ignore the theme of judgement in today's scripture. The passage from Ezekiel chosen to link with the gospel, comes after the Lord had judged the religious leaders of God's people and found them utterly wanting, so much so, the Lord himself took over looking after the sheep. Notice the verbs, rescue, pasture, look for, bring back, bandage, make strong, all very positive, sensitive, uplifting, safe in God's care.

In the gospel Jesus is looking to the end time, when 'the son of man comes in glory', and 'all the nations will be assembled before him'. Then a judgement takes place, the sheep on his right representing those who recognised needs of others and did something about them are invited to inherit the kingdom, prepared from the foundation of the world. The goats on the left representing those who failed to do so are sent away for punishment. And at the heart of the story is Jesus identifying himself with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner, which means he will be found in refugee camps, back alleys, detention centres, hospitals, prisons.

The needs Matthew mentions are not specifically religious needs, they are human needs just as the response to these needs is also a human one. There are needs on our doorsteps, as foodbanks and day/night shelters testify, and there are needs which are global because of our decisions. The relentless but unsustainable use of precious resources have had devastating global consequences. One example, in 2017 Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, went to Fiji for a meeting of the Anglican primates in the Oceanic region where he was told, 'For you Europeans climate change is a thing of the future. For us it is a matter of everyday survival.' In this country we might be inconvenienced by rain or heat, in other parts of the world it means flooding or drought, making the difference between there being a harvest or not, having devastating effects on the poor.

This gospels remind us not only of our relationship with God and other humans but with the planet, today's feast is Christ the King of the Universe! We have it within our power, to live in such a way that we can make a difference. Think of the billions of £'s poured into the fight against Covid, and think what a difference it would make if a similar amount was used to halt global warming, to educate against pollution, to work towards greater sustainability, to uphold the beauty of mountains and seas, indeed of all God's creation of which we are an intricate part. We cannot run away from the fact that the decisions and actions we make and take affect the well being of people in the developing world. Today's gospel reminds us that we will all have to give an account of ourselves before God and how we have responded to the needs of our brothers and sisters will be high on the agenda. Hopefully we will remember the words of the King, 'I tell you solemnly in as far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me,' and then hear the words '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...and you...'

## Bidding Prayers for Christ the King

Celebrant:

Our Shepherd King seeks out the lost, brings back the stray, bandages the wounded and makes the weak strong. Through him we pray to the God Christ invites us to call Father.

Reader:

For the Church as we conclude this liturgical year – that we will be committed to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, recognising the presence of Christ in each one.

Lord in your mercy

For world leaders – that they will model their lives on that of Christ the King of the Universe who came not to be served but to serve.

Lord in your mercy

For our young people for whom this is a special feast day – that they will grow in their knowledge, love and service of Christ, the servant King.

Lord in your mercy

For those whose lives have been blighted by climate change – that they may receive the support they need at the present time and be reassured that people everywhere will do all they can to reduce harmful carbon emissions.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the current pandemic, and Joseph Shyne, Harry Howarth, Thomas Edward McDaid and Robert Heught whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the King of the Universe. You shepherd creation with your kindness and watch us with care. May we seek to reveal your compassion and love to the whole of creation so that all earthly powers may come to revere you who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen