

# Sunday Message

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

THE WORD

Year A • 26 November 2023 • Colour: White • Psalter Week 2

## SERVANT KING

MATTHEW 25:31-46



If you enjoy fantastic TV dramas like *The Crown*, you will have an insight into the rarefied life of modern royalty.

Monarchy has always fascinated people. It continues to fascinate us. Think of the response worldwide to the death of Queen Elizabeth II last year, or the acres of newsprint about Meghan and Prince Harry. But today's feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe offers an alternative version of royalty, the kind embraced by Jesus.

Today's feast marks the end of the Church's liturgical year. It is always celebrated on the last Sunday before Advent. Unlike today, in times past monarchs were people of absolute power who commanded respect, obedience and fear. They fought battles and lorded it over their subjects. But Jesus' kingship is of an entirely different sort.

The Gospel story of the last judgement gives us a clear insight into Jesus' idea of kingship. For him kingship is not about power and authority but about service. It is not about big palaces, and expensive clothes and fine dining, but being on the margins with those who have little or nothing. On the last day, in our hour of judgement, we will be judged on one thing only – whether and to what extent our attitude to others led us to reach out to them in love and mercy.

Christ the servant king is our model, our Lord, the one we are called to imitate. ■

## REFLECT

**T**he feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe challenges us both as a Church and as individual Christians.

First, it's a reminder that power and authority in the Church must always be about service; that those who exercise power and authority must model themselves on Jesus, the servant king, and not on any earthly model of authority. The Church is not a democracy but it is unfortunate that it retains a structure of authority and of dress and rank and titles – even of bishops' houses called palaces – that are based on a medieval model of government.

The Church is not following the example of Christ King of the Universe if it is not, in the words of Pope Francis, a poor Church of the poor that offers humble service.

Second, today's feast reminds us that as Christians, our lives must be about service and love. Service and love even of people we don't know personally.

At the last judgement, on what basis will God separate the saved from the lost? Not on how often we went to Mass or how much we put into the collection plate. Not even on whether we served the church in an official capacity, ordained or non-ordained. But rather on

something altogether more demanding and difficult: 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...

Just as Jesus, our king, gave himself, shared himself and broke himself for others out of love, so also must we give ourselves, share ourselves and break ourselves for others out of love. How good we are at doing that will determine whether or not we are worthy of a place in the everlasting kingdom of justice, peace and love.

Imitate the example of our servant king, and salvation will be ours. ■

## PRAY

Pray for our country, that its care for the weakest and most vulnerable members of society will be a reflection of the kingdom of God.

## DO

Reach out this week to someone in need or distress. Look for the person of Christ in everyone you meet.

## LEARN

Today's feast, created by Pope Pius XI, was first celebrated in 1926. Recall what the world was like back then. Mussolini's fascists were in power in Italy. A fanatic called Hitler was stirring up trouble in Germany. Stalin was gaining ascendancy in the Soviet Union; extremist movements offering messiah-type leaders were on the rise.

Pius XI was saying to the world that despite dictatorships and political unrest and the rise of ideologies of the left and right, Jesus Christ is still King of the Universe. There is only one lord, one ruler, one model, one monarch – Jesus of Nazareth, a king who washed people's feet and died on a cross. This is the king to whom we owe allegiance.

## SAY

**“Lord, help me to recognise you as my king and saviour, who shows me the way to true happiness.”**

**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.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
whose will is to restore all things  
in your beloved Son, the King of the universe,  
grant, we pray,  
that the whole creation, set free from slavery,  
may render your majesty service  
and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING** Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

The Lord says this: I am going to look after  
my flock myself and keep all of it in view. As a  
shepherd keeps all his flock in view when he  
stands up in the middle of his scattered sheep, so  
shall I keep my sheep in view. I shall rescue them  
from wherever they have been scattered during  
the mist and darkness. I myself will pasture my  
sheep, I myself will show them where to rest – it is  
the Lord who speaks. I shall look for the lost one,  
bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and  
make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat  
and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them.

As for you, my sheep, the Lord says this: I will  
judge between sheep and sheep, between rams  
and he-goats.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM** Psalm 22

Response:

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

- The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose. (R.)
- Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name. (R.)

- You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. (R.)

- Surely goodness and kindness shall  
follow me  
all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever. (R.)

**SECOND READING** 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Corinthians.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the  
first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death  
came through one man and in the same way the  
resurrection of the dead has come through one  
man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will  
be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their  
proper order: Christ as the first fruits and then,  
after the coming of Christ, those who belong to  
him. After that will come the end, when he hands  
over the kingdom to God the Father, having  
done away with every sovereignty, authority and  
power. For he must be king until he has put all his  
enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies  
to be destroyed is death, for everything is to be put  
under his feet. And when everything is subjected  
to him, then the Son himself will be subject in his  
turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so  
that God may be all in all.

The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia! Blessings on him who  
comes in the name of the Lord!  
Blessings on the coming kingdom of our  
father David! Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** Matthew 25:31-46

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
Matthew.

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; 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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;

through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice  
by which the human race is reconciled to you,  
we humbly pray  
that your Son himself may bestow on all  
nations  
the gifts of unity and peace.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Lord sits as King for ever.  
The Lord will bless his people with peace.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Having received the food of immortality,  
we ask, O Lord,  
that, glorying in obedience  
to the commands of Christ, the King of the  
universe,  
we may live with him eternally in his  
heavenly Kingdom.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.