



Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ – King of the Universe † Sunday 26th November 2017

In England and Wales Cycle of Prayer:
Young people

Keynote: Our destiny as servants of Christ in the world

Prophet Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

The Old Testament is rich in the use of the images of shepherds and kings. Here God is presented as the good ruler – the good shepherd – who undoes the damage all those bad rulers do. *‘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,’* says God speaking through the prophet Ezekiel. *‘I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness... I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong... I shall be a good shepherd to them.’* The ministry of reconciliation and healing forgiveness, the willingness to go in search, to find the lost and stray is at the very heart of the mission of Christ and the Church, indeed of the mission of each one of us.

Responsorial Psalm 22 [23] – A confident song of trust in the shepherd

First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

The apostle Paul too, sees the victorious risen Christ as coming at the end of time to destroy the hostile powers that keep us mortals captive and enslaved. Even death will be overcome through the power of Christ’s resurrection, for *‘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... so all will be brought to life in Christ,’* and then *‘will come the end, when he (Christ) hands over the kingdom to God the father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power.’* The risen Christ leads humanity through life and death to attain and to reach its destiny of eternal glory in the reign of God.

Gospel according to Matthew 25:31-46

Still writing about the *Parousia* – the last things – the evangelist Matthew gives us the image of the final ‘Judgement of the Nations’. The medieval pictures of sinners and saints, to the left and right of Christ sitting in glory, with the devils being cast into hell will be familiar to many who consider this gospel passage. Jesus said to his disciples, *‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory... then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats.’* I prefer to concentrate upon the invitation that follows this apocalyptic image of that final judgement. For Jesus says, *‘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.”* The simple truth is we know what is expected of us both as Church and as disciple.

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Note: Sunday 3rd December 2017 – First Sunday of Advent – Sunday Reading Cycle B starts