

English Homily  
The Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe (A)  
November 22, 2020

Today we come to the last Sunday of the 2020 liturgical year which means we celebrate the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. It is interesting that the Church instituted this feast in 1925 amid the rise of dictators like Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler. The Church was saying “No!” to all those false claims to ultimate authority. We know that ultimate authority belongs only to Christ the King.

Today’s first reading is taken from Ezekiel, a Jewish priest, who witnessed Israel’s greatest catastrophe when Jerusalem was completely destroyed, the Temple was burned to the ground, and the Jewish people carried off into slavery. Israel which was meant to be the nation to gather all the other nations of the world under the one true God was crushed.

King Nebuchadnezzar, a foreign dictator, and his brutal army were responsible for this tragedy, but Ezekiel also says that bad leadership by religious shepherds caused Israel to become vulnerable to foreign domination. “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep? You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not bring back the strayed nor seek the lost, but you lorded it over them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered for lack of a shepherd.”

What will God do for his chosen people? “For thus says the Lord God: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I will lead them out from among the peoples and gather them from the foreign lands; I will bring them back to their own country and pasture them upon the mountains of Israel.” God seems to be saying that he has tolerated this bad leadership long enough so He himself will come to rescue and reunite the people of Israel.

Look at the history of Israel, in the Old Testament, filled with the stories of the patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. Men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. All are chosen by God to reunite the people of Israel; some did better than others. But Jesus is not just another human representative. He is the incarnate Son of God who teaches us how a true shepherd acts.

He reaches out to the weak, cures the sick and the injured, and brings back into God's presence those who were on the margins of life. Jesus not only fulfills Ezekiel's prophecy but he goes further. Jesus becomes the eternal Shepherd through his death and resurrection. He becomes King of the Universe conquering sin and death, uniting heaven and earth.

Jesus, the Eternal Shepherd and Universal King, is calling us to be his new shepherds. But, what does this mean for us today?

Today's Gospel, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, tells us what it means to be God's new shepherds. "When I was hungry you gave me food. When I was thirsty and you gave me a drink. When I was in prison you visited me., etc. When Christ King of the Universe sends us out into the world - this is how we act.

At the end of each day we might ask ourselves: Were there people who crossed my path today that were literally hungry for food? Did I feed them? Were there people that crossed my path today that were hungry in other ways - may be hungry for my attention, hungry for a few moments of my time? Did I feed them? Were there people who dropped into my life today that were thirsty for love, kindness, and friendship? Did God put in my life today a person who needed literally needed clothes or a place to rest? Did God put another who needed to be protected from personal attacks and gossip? Did I have the opportunity to visit someone who is literally in jail? Was there someone reaching out to me who is stuck in the prison of addiction or dysfunctional relationships?

When we do these things, we are the privileged instruments by which Christ, the King of the Universe, continues to lead his own people. So today, as we honor Christ, the King of the Universe, may we also help him by being good sheep and his holy people.