



The Shepherd who Conquers Death

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Ez 34:11-12,15-17)

¹¹For thus says the Lord GOD: Look! I myself will search for my sheep and examine them. ¹²As a shepherd examines his flock while he himself is among his scattered sheep, so will I examine my sheep. I will deliver them from every place where they were scattered on the day of dark clouds. ¹⁵I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest—oracle of the Lord GOD. ¹⁶The lost I will search out, the strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal; but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd them in judgment. ¹⁷As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I will judge between one sheep and another, between rams and goats.

THE FOCUS: God as Shepherd

COMMENTARY

- The Reading acknowledges God as a shepherd.
- In the Reading, God speaks in the first person “I.”
- The Reading enumerates the acts of God as a shepherd:
 - I will look after and tend my sheep (v.11).
 - I will tend my flock among the scattered sheep (v.12a).
 - I will tend my sheep (v.12b).
 - I will rescue them... (v.12c).
 - I will pasture my sheep (v.15).
 - I will give them rest (v.15b).
 - I will seek out the lost (v.16)
 - I will bring back the strayed (v.16b).
 - I will bind up the injured (v.16c).
 - I will heal the sick (v.16d).
 - I will shepherd them rightly (v.16e).
 - I will judge my sheep (v.17).

REFLECTIONS

God is a good king.

He exercises his leadership by being a good shepherd. He also shows his authority by giving judgment.

As a shepherd, he demonstrates concern for his flock:

Tending = guiding / directing / keeping them together (integrated). He does not like to scatter them (more vulnerable to danger, closer to death).

Seeking out = rescuing, locating when someone goes astray.

Pasturing = feeding / satisfying their basic needs

Giving rest = respecting / sensitive to their right to rest / to pause / to relax / to recoup their energies.

Healing = the wounded, strengthening the weak, bringing back the injured. Everyone counts.

As a judge, God will dispense justice in this manner:

He will judge in full view of one another, not one after the other.

He will destroy the sleek and the strong (mean and arrogant).

To understand why there is so much concern on good shepherding, read the text that precedes our reading:

Ez 34:5-8 So they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered and wandered over all the mountains and high hills; my sheep were scattered over the whole earth, with no one to look after them or to search for them. Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep have been given over to pillage, and because my sheep have become food for every wild beast, for lack of a shepherd; because my shepherds did not look after my sheep, but pastured themselves and did not pasture my sheep.

God cannot tolerate the suffering of his people caused by bad leadership.

SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS, KING OF THE UNIVERSE (A) • November 26, 2017

Because of irresponsible and negligent leaders, God's people wander about without direction, live in chaos, are defenseless, and prone to danger.

God is determined to shepherd them, to give them justice.

This is a great consolation for the people who have long been neglected and taken advantage of.

God as a shepherd has a heart for his sheep. He does not allow any injustice to his sheep.

Yet, as a shepherd, he will also judge his people according to their deeds. They are also responsible for their sins.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6)
**THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD;
THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT.**

SECOND READING (1 Cor 15:20-26.28)

^{20*} ^h But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*
^{21*} For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being. ²² For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life, ²³ but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ For **he must reign** until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ^{26*} ^m The last enemy to be destroyed is death, ²⁸ 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.

THE FOCUS: The Reign of the Resurrected Christ

COMMENTARY

- Jesus is the first fruit, by virtue of his resurrection (v.20).
- His resurrection prompts the resurrection of others (v.21).
- As the first fruit, he reigns over all:
 - He brings all back to life, v.22, in proper order (v.23).
 - The end of time (his coming again) happens with:
 - Handing over the kingdom to God and Father (v.24).

- Destruction of every sovereignty, authority and power (v.24) that oppose him.

- Until his enemies are subjugated (including death, which is the last enemy) (vv.25-26).
- Christ too will be subjected to the Father (v.28).

REFLECTIONS

St. Paul is reflecting on the mystery of the resurrection of Jesus.

In his reflection, Paul considers that:

Resurrection is not just a bodily resurrection, but an affirmation that Jesus comes from God (*it is God who raised him. Jesus did not rise by himself.*)

Resurrection makes Christ the first born (*pre-eminent among all people*).

Resurrection empowers Christ to destroy his enemies (*anything / anybody that contradicts his teachings and mystery*), including death.

The believers will be like Christ resurrecting, defeating all enemies.

We cannot understand Christ's kingship without faith in his resurrection.

Christ's kingship is submission to the Father.

GOSPEL READING (Mt 25:31-46)

⁴⁶ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.*

Setting: Son of Man as judge, as shepherd

^{31*} ^f "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, ³² 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. ³³ He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Reward to the committed

³⁴ 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. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous* will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will say to them in



reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Punishment to the uncommitted

⁴¹ 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.’ ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ 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.’ ⁴⁴ 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?’ ⁴⁵ 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.’

Conclusion / Recap of reward and punishment

⁴⁶ And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.’

THE FOCUS: Judgment Day

REFLECTIONS

Jesus comes as a judge at the end of time. The imagery of his coming (*in glory, with angels*) is typical in apocalyptic literature. It heightens the majesty of Christ.

After all the tenderness, compassion, love, consideration and hard work he has shown to all humankind comes judgment day.

Why does he not show his unfailing love once more to all of us? Is Jesus angry with those who do not respond? Is there no more hope?

COMMENTARY

Setting: Son of Man as judge, as shepherd

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, 32 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. 33 He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Reward (Right)

³⁴ 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.

Good deeds done

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.

Reaction

³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’ ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’

Answer

⁴⁰ And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’

Punishment (Left)

⁴¹ 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.

No good deeds done (parang walang nakita, narinig)

⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ 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.’

Reaction

⁴⁴ 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?’

Answer

⁴⁵ 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.’

Well, according to the Gospel Reading, we have to accept that there is a limit to everything.

There is a consequence in everything we do.

We cannot be forever playing games with God. If we do not fix our sinful lives now (vices, complacency), we will not fare well in the time of judgment.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

God exercises his authority by **shepherding** his flock (First Reading). He is the king, king of the kingless (*leaderless, victimized*) flock.

Jesus Christ exercises his authority as king by **destroying** evil and death (Second Reading).

Jesus Christ exercises his authority as king, by **judging** everyone according to his deeds (Gospel Reading).

How to develop your sharing / homily

First of all, the kingship of Christ was not spared of being misunderstood.

It was misunderstood by Herod the Great (*Jesus was a threat to his kingdom, therefore, he should kill him*), by people who wanted to make him (political) king after feeding the thousands, and then, by Pilate (*are you the king of the Jews?*) like the Hasmonean kings.

But Christ as king was unexpectedly affirmed by the thief at the right hand of Christ during the crucifixion.

What kind of kingship did Christ exercise?

His kingship was expressed in service, not in lording it over, not by victimizing, not by manipulating, nor abandoning, nor sitting pretty on his throne.

His kingship was expressed in his active ministry of teaching, healing and forgiving.

Jesus exercised his kingship by restoring people back to themselves and to God.

Jesus reached out to the poor and the oppressed.

He defended them from religious legalism.

He gave meaning to their sufferings and showed them how to live in dignity and freedom.

That is how Jesus exercised his kingship. He became a servant to all.

As king-judge, his criterion for giving favorable

judgment is imitation of him.

Failure to imitate Christ as servant-king excludes us from his kingdom.

How do we exercise our kingship (*servanthood*) in the family, in our church, in our community?

We do not make positions as status symbols.

We do not use our authority to oppress the weak.

We continue serving, we do not abandon work even if we get hurt in the process.

As church leaders, we do not put ourselves above the parish priests, bishops, our superiors and God in terms of exercising power. We can do only as much as we represent them.

We see to it that the needs of our members are met, their voice represented.

Christ the King comes to shepherd us through the eucharist.

In the eucharist, Christ the King comes to feed us with his body and blood.

In the eucharist, Christ comes to heal our woundedness.

In the eucharist, Christ comes to give us direction.

In the eucharist, Christ comes to save us from sin and death.

III. OUR CONTEXT

Tyrants
Domineering
Bulldozer
Autocratic
Terrorist
Victimizer
Manipulator
Rules by the barrel of the gun
Authoritarian
Dictator
Without vision
Humble servant leader
Nurturing
Facilitating
Inspiring
Forming
Shock absorber
Assuring
Confidence builder
Soft spoken but carries a big stick (firm)

—Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM