

## **November 26 XXXIV Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Today's Scripture Readings revolve around the Last Judgment scene of Jesus Christ coming in glory and power. The Franciscan Order, following the lead of its great thirteenth century theologians St. Bonaventure and Blessed Duns Scotus, was instrumental in establishing the Feast of Christ the King and extending the celebration to the other local Churches. It was not until 1925, in his encyclical *Quas Primas* that Pope Pius XI actually instituted The Feast of Christ the King for the Universal Church. He did so because he recognized that the people had "thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives," believing "these had no place in public affairs or in politics." Pope Pius connected the increasing denial of Christ as king to the rise of secularism throughout Europe. At the time of *Quas Primas*, many Christians (including Catholics), had begun to doubt Christ's authority and existence, as well as the Church's power to continue Christ's authority, because they had been witnessing the rise of non-Christian dictatorships in Europe. These dictators often attempted to assert authority over the Church. Pope Pius XI hoped the institution of the feast would have various effects: 1. That nations would see that the Church has the right to freedom, and immunity from the state. 2. That leaders and nations would see that they are bound to give respect to Christ. 3. That the faithful would gain strength and courage from the celebration of the feast, as we are reminded that Christ must reign in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies.

When Pope Pius XI brought the Feast of Christ the King into the liturgy in 1925 he wanted to bring Christ as Ruler, and Christian values, back into lives of Christians, into society, and into politics. The Feast was a reminder to the totalitarian governments of Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin that Jesus Christ is the only Sovereign King. Although Emperors and Kings now exist mostly in history books, we still honor Christ as the King of the Universe by enthroning Jesus in our hearts, surrendering our lives to God. This feast challenges us to see Christ the King in everyone, especially those whom our society considers the least important, and to treat each person with the same love, mercy, and compassion Jesus showed.

The first reading, taken from the Prophet Ezekiel, introduces God as the Good Shepherd, reminding us of Christ's claim to be the Good-Shepherd-King, leading, feeding and protecting his sheep. In today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 23), we

rejoice in Jesus, who is our Good Shepherd. In the second reading, St. Paul presents Christ as the all-powerful Ruler-King Who raises the dead and to Whom every form of power and authority must eventually give way.

Today's Gospel describes Christ the King coming in Heavenly glory to judge us, based on how we have shared our love and blessings with others through genuine acts of charity in our lives. Jesus is present to us now, not only as our Good Shepherd leading, feeding, and healing his sheep, but also as dwelling in those for whom we care. In the parable of the separation of the sheep from the goats at the Last Judgment, every person to whom we give ourselves, "whether hungry, thirsty or a stranger, naked, sick or in prison," is revealed to us as having been the risen Jesus. Our reward or punishment depends on how we have recognized and treated this risen Jesus in the needy.

1) We need to recognize and appreciate Christ's presence within us and surrender our lives to Christ's rule: Since Christ, our King, lives in our hearts with the Holy Spirit and His Heavenly Father and fills our souls with His grace, we need to learn to surrender our lives to Him, to live in His Holy Presence, and to do God's will by sharing His forgiving love with others around us. Aware of His presence in the Bible, in the Sacraments, and in the worshipping community, we need to listen and talk to Him.

2) We need to learn to be servers: Since Christ was a Servant-King we are invited to be His loyal citizens by rendering humble service to others and by sharing Christ's mercy and forgiveness with others.

3) We need to use our authority to support the rule of Jesus. This feast is an invitation to all those who have power or authority in the public or the private realms to use it for Jesus by bearing witness to Him in the way we live. Parents are expected to use their God-given authority to train their children in Christian ideals and in the ways of committed Christian living.

4) We need to accept Jesus Christ as the King of love. Jesus, who came to proclaim to all of us the Good News of God's love and salvation, gave us His new commandment of love: "Love one another as I have loved you," (Jn. 13:34), and demonstrated that love by dying for us sinners. We accept Jesus as our King of love when we love others as Jesus already loves us — unconditionally, sacrificially, and with agape love.