

# Read

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Psalm 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

## LIVING THE WORD

# Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 22, 2020



## REFLECTION

Throughout all of Scripture, we are reminded that God is a God of justice, concerned for the poor, promising to strike down those who exploit or oppress the vulnerable. Today's Gospel passage goes beyond expressing God's desire for justice by clearly and definitively linking our eternal judgment with how we treat people in need. Why? Because how we treat "the least" of our brothers and sisters is how we treat God. Interestingly, neither the sheep nor the goats are aware that they are serving or ignoring God. Both wonder when they saw Christ because it's difficult to imagine Christ, the King of the Universe, in need of food, clothing, and shelter. But that's just it; Jesus chooses to identify with people that are easily forgotten and ignored, calls "the least" our brothers and sisters, and tells us that how we treat them determines whether we will go to heaven or hell.



## ACTION

Catholic social teaching takes this imperative to care for "the least" and gives us guidance in applying it to social issues and injustices. Today, consider human trafficking, in which men, women, and children are lured with false promises, entrapped through physical and psychological abuse, or kidnapped for the purpose of exploitation. Modern-day human slavery affects every nation, nationality, gender, and age group, victimizing over 25 million people in forced labor and sexual slavery. Fight human trafficking through **SHEPHERD** (Stop Human Trafficking and Exploitation. Protect, Help, Empower, and Restore Dignity), which educates and equips Catholics with needed knowledge and skills to combat forced labor at the local level.



**Read *Bakhita: A Novel of the Saint of Sudan*, inspired by the true story of a former slave who was canonized a saint in 2000.**



## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ In light of today's Gospel, where do you see Christ in your daily life?
- ❖ What opportunities do you have in through your Church or school to serve "the least" of your brothers and sisters?



November 22, 2020

# SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

## LECTIONARY #160A

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Psalms 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

## Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

### Leader's Context

From the earliest days of salvation history, God's people have been called to the care of the poor. This care is not a token act, nor is it a small part of what's expected of the Church. Care of the poor is foundational, and it is a defining characteristic of Catholicism. "The poor" are not a separate group from the rest of humanity; we are all God's children, created in his own image and likeness. When we lovingly and vigilantly care for the poor, it is like tending Christ himself. When we ignore or overlook the plight of the poor, it is like ignoring Jesus himself.

**Q FOCUS:** *Caring for the poor, caring for Christ.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. This feast is always celebrated on the last Sunday of the liturgical year. It recalls the kingship of Christ over all of creation. Today's Gospel reading reminds us of Christ's role as ruler and judge in the final judgment that will happen at the end of time. Although we might already be thinking about Christmas, recall that this feast is an important reminder that Advent, which begins the new liturgical next week, is also a time of preparation to ready ourselves for Christ's Second Coming.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Furthermore, while there are just differences between people, their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace. It is for public and private organization to be at the service of the dignity and destiny of humanity; let them spare no effort to banish every vestige of social and political slavery and to safeguard basic human rights under every political system" (*Gaudium et spes*, 29).

## Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

### Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Matthew 25:31-46

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, 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. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 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. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.' 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. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 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.' 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?' 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.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Imagine that you met Jesus. You recognize him, and you know it is him. He is outside a local restaurant, and he is holding a paper cup for donations. When he meets your eyes, you see hunger in them. His lips are cracked and dry. As you get closer you see that his clothes are torn, and not fully covering his shoulders, and you realize how cold he must be feeling.

You feel shocked. How can Jesus be in such a miserable position? As someone walks by you hear the person mutter, "Probably going to use my money for drugs, I won't give him a thing." Seconds later another person throws an empty coffee cup at his feet and sneers, "Get a job." A third person glances at Jesus and ignores him, despite the fact he is shivering.

► **How would you feel to witness people treat Jesus in this manner? What would you do for Jesus, if you found him in such a circumstance?**

When we ignore poverty, it is like ignoring our Lord himself. The care of the poor isn't an issue for political liberals or conservatives, it is a responsibility that all Christians bear. This responsibility is at the very heart of the Gospel, the very heart of Christianity, and it is evident in the heart of Jesus we see so clearly illustrated in the Gospel.

At its most basic, Christianity is understood in the two greatest commandments: loving the Lord God above all else and loving our neighbors as ourselves. The essential message of today's Gospel reading boils down to these commandments. We love God by following his commands, and we should love our neighbors as ourselves. God has commanded that we care for those who are poor.

► **Think back to a few weeks ago when we heard the Gospel passage that includes these two commandments (Matthew 22:34-40, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time). How do they relate to this Gospel passage?**

Poverty exists in many forms. We most commonly picture it in regard to physical poverty—a lack of food, clean water, clothing, or housing. When loving others, we must care for them, ensuring that their plates are filled, that they have coats that withstand the weather, and that they have roofs over their heads. We must see that their basic human needs are met, if they cannot meet those needs themselves. The Catholic Church is committed to this ministry and has been since its earliest days. Today, we can look at things like Catholic social teaching, the corporal works of mercy, and the spiritual works of mercy as ways to live out Christ's mission in our world today.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 66.*

**We do not forget the poor, because it is like forgetting Christ himself.**

**We show our love for God through our actions of loving and caring for one another.**

**Humanitarian effort has been a part of the Church since its inception and is a defining ministry of Christ's followers.**

## Act on the Word

### Recognizing the Need

*You will want to invite three or four volunteers from various service organizations within your parish to speak to your group. The goal of this activity is to have the young people contribute in a concrete way to a ministry that serves the poor and marginalized of your community.*

Who are the poor in your community? How does your parish already serve the underprivileged in your region? Have your guest speakers share what their ministry does and how the young people might become involved. After the presentations, have the young people decide how best your group can help one of these ministries. Help the young people organize contributions or donations amongst themselves to give to this ministry. Perhaps you can plan to make bags of essential items for the homeless. The teens can assign who should bring in which items

and the bags can be assembled at next week's meeting. Check with the ministry volunteer to see what items should be included. They will often include things like warm socks, toothbrushes and toothpaste, mini flashlights, sealed snack sized packets of crackers or other non-perishable foods, gift cards for grocery stores or restaurants, and hygiene items.

Conclude your planning this week by discussing the challenges of homelessness with the young people and help them become aware of the poverty most often encountered in your area. You might want to invite your speakers to take part in this discussion and share their experiences.

### Closing Prayer

*Christ our Lord,  
you have shown us the way to you  
through service to one another.  
May we see you in broken lives as well as  
in the breaking of the bread.  
Shepherd us in the path of justice, mercy,  
and peace,  
for you live and reign with God the Father  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

### For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*