



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, You understand the difficulties we face. We ask that You guide us as we take our final exam here on earth. Guide us with Your Word. Assist us with Your sacraments. May we pass the test of faith, hope, and love, until we find ourselves before Your Son, our Lord and King. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Everything has an end.

Our Church year ends this Sunday with the Feast of Christ the King. However, just as the year ends, we are preparing for a new year with the season of Advent. Next week is a new beginning.

As we celebrate Christ the King Sunday, we are reminded that our life itself has an end. However, depending on how we live out our life here on Earth, our new beginning will be one of eternal bliss or eternal torment.

As we recall, this life we have here is our final exam. When we stand before the Lord at the gates of heaven, we will not be given another test. Instead, we will be given a final grade.

Our First Reading and Gospel today give us an example of how we are to be graded. Jesus, the Shepherd, will separate the sheep from the goats. In other words, our grades will be pass or fail.

Fortunately, while Jesus is a just King, He is also a Good Shepherd who has us in His best interest. It is for this reason, the Lord provides us ample opportunities to pass the test while here on Earth. Walking away from sin, living in Christ, and tending to the needy are just a few ways in which we can stand confidently before our Good Shepherd and Just Judge.

Question

Are you a sheep or a goat? Or, are you a little bit of both?

Commentary

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

There's a lot packed into this reading.

It seems those Corinthians to whom St. Paul addresses his letter were often confused. He found it necessary to explain the order of things, especially the things regarding the Lord's resurrection.

In the verse after our Second Reading today (1 Cor 15:29), Paul needs to remind the Corinthians that they are not to take their faith in vain: "Otherwise, what will people accomplish by having themselves baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they having themselves baptized for them?"

Paul is trying to set the Church straight on Jesus' nature and our salvation. Jesus is raised first and those who follow Him will rise with Him when He returns in glory.

As Christians, we know this. However, to have this knowledge in our mind but not in our heart can be very dangerous. To know Christ and the bright promise that awaits those of us who follow Him is very promising. That is, if we follow Him!

Thankfully, we have Paul, our Scripture, our Tradition, our Church, our Sacraments, our priests and catechists to help us stay on track and follow the Lord until He comes again. Left alone, we will wander. We will forget what is important. We will cling to the things of this earth and fail to see the great and awesome opportunity that awaits us all when we see our Lord.

Question

What does it mean to live forever with Christ?

This is the second of a two-part series,
Our Final Exam

Information: dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood

Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

A king has the power to judge.

The verse we should reflect on is “and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats”.

The kingdom is compared, not to a shepherd nor to the sheep and the goats, but to the act of separation. Jesus uses other parables related to separation: wheat and weeds, good and bad fish, good and bad stewards. These are all are parables about judgment.

We are all sent on mission. Just like the early disciples in the church, the mission is clear: feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned. We all know the mission.

On this solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the universe, let's be mindful of His role. A king has the power to judge.

This is our final exam. How will He judge us in the end?

Question

Do I think of Jesus as a king and a judge, or just my buddy?

This Week's Task

We are concluding the A-Cycle of Readings of a three-year cycle with this Sunday. Over this last year, we focused on the Gospel of Matthew.

Next week begins a new Church year. The primary Gospel for the B-Cycle is Mark, although we will also reflect on passages from the Gospel of John.

This week, you are invited to read the entire Gospel of Mark. There are only 16 chapters in the entire Gospel, so you can do it in one sitting. However, you are invited to make notes and find common themes throughout the Gospel.

Try to discover something new in your reading of Mark. If you have questions about the readings, consider visiting the following link: <https://stpaulcenter.com/the-gospel-of-mark/>

Group Prayer

The group prays the following Prayer:

Almighty and merciful God,
you break the power of evil and make all things new in your Son Jesus Christ, the King of the universe.

May all in heaven and earth
acclaim your glory and never cease to praise you.

We ask this through Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Continue with Psalm 23

Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Conclude with an Our Father