



# WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



## SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING, CYCLE A

Fr. David Rosenberg

*"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." Matt 25:40*

For this final Sunday in our Church year, we celebrate Jesus Christ as "King of the Universe." In celebrating this, we acknowledge and ponder His Second Coming, when there will be a separation of those who accept Jesus and His teachings from those who reject Jesus as savior.

This is the heart of this Sunday's parable, the eternal divide of the separation of "the sheep from the goats." This is the heart of this parable. Its great truth does not center so much on who are "sheep" and those who are "goats" as it does on the certainty that there are sheep and there are goats, and the two will be separated. The image is taken from the actual practice of shepherds caring for their flock, of the necessity of separating goats from sheep at night. They graze together during the day, but the goats must be separated at night because, unlike the sheep, they need shelter from the cold.

The image as it is told by Jesus indicates that the ultimate separation at the end of time is necessary and inevitable and is based on whether or not His message is received and lived.

The sheep that are at the Son of Man's right hand are those that recognize and accept the messenger and the message. The goats on the left did not recognize or accept the messenger or the message. Such a view impresses on us that Jesus is speaking of his disciples whom he sent out into the world to preach his message. When He refers to the thirsty, naked, ill and imprisoned He is speaking of the ones who were either cared for or neglected. In a broader sense we can reflect on His Sermon on the Mount found earlier in Matthew, chapter 5, and His Sermon on the Plain found in Luke 6:20-49 to appreciate a fuller understanding of His message.

We see over and over that the parables of Jesus are concerned with the acceptance or rejection of the tenets of His core teachings. We need to remember that such acceptance or rejection is ultimately acceptance or rejection of God the Father who sent Jesus and the Holy Spirit into the world. To reject Jesus the Son and His mystical body constituted in His Church is to reject God the Father.

As we close our Church year, we remember that Jesus Christ is completing His final preparations for His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. His message penetrates the very hearts and minds of His disciples. As we reflect on His promise, "I am with you until the end of the age," (Matt 28:20) we carry on in our seemingly uncertain life a divine longing for Him to dwell personally in our human heart, which he fashioned for just this very end.

For the sheep that follow him, we are shepherded into the eternal Kingdom as we accompany Him along the Pilgrims Way of the Cross to the New and Eternal Jerusalem.

Over time, through grace, our stony hearts (Ez 36) are fashioned into hearts that long to incarnate the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that we might energize the world with His burning presence, as He synchronizes His pulse with the Heartbeat of the World.

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew**

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."

***The Gospel of the Lord***

