



a Kendall Hunt Company

Christ the King, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

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

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word or image that engages you?

Read the following **Word in Liturgy** and **Catholic Doctrine** sections. Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need.

The Word In Liturgy

On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, the Church celebrates the feast of Christ the King. Instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 to combat the growing secularism and atheism of his time, it is one of the so-called "idea feasts" that do not celebrate an event in the life of Jesus but rather some aspect of his identity. In it we recognize and honor Christ as ruler and universal shepherd. The original feast of Christ the King is the Ascension, in which the Church celebrates the exalted Christ, crowned with glory at the right hand of God. Today's celebration should remind us of that more important feast as the liturgical year comes to a close.

The establishment of a monarchy in Israel was initially resisted and seen as a betrayal of the more ancient ideal of a theocracy with Yahweh as sole king. Eventually, a king was established but a certain ambivalence toward the institution of the monarchy can be traced throughout the history of the chosen people. David, the shepherd king, became the idealized figure of the monarchy, but the tradition maintained its awareness that Yahweh must always be the real king over his people. The repeated failures and infidelities of the kings in both north and south only reinforced this tradition of suspicion of earthly kings.

During the Babylonian exile, Ezekiel issued a scathing denunciation of the false shepherds who had led the people astray (Ezekiel 34:1-10). Then, in what must surely have been words that brought relief and hope to the exiles, he delivers the Lord's promise to return, to shepherd the people once again himself. The mention of judgment (v. 17) adds an



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eschatological dimension that makes the text all the more fitting for this last day of the liturgical year. The choice of psalmody is obvious in light of Ezekiel's use of the shepherd imagery.

The judgment scene in Matthew 25 is unique to his gospel and forms the climactic conclusion to his Eschatological Discourse. Only here in all of the gospels does Jesus ascribe to himself the status of a king rendering judgment. The criteria of that judgment are most striking: They are the simple acts of love and kindness directed to the little ones of this world. To have done these everyday works of goodness is to have touched Jesus himself; to have neglected to do them is to have neglected the needs of Christ, an omission worthy of condemnation. This implies that doing the works of goodness called for here is already to have gained access to the reign of God and to have chosen not to act in love is already a choice not to belong to God's reign.

Catholic Doctrine

To Judge the Living and the Dead

This phrase from the Nicene Creed expresses our Catholic belief that Christ who died and was raised up again to new life has been given the right as our Redeemer to judge the works and hearts of all (CCC 679).

This revelation that we await is the judgment Christ the King will render. There are two judgments that occur, particular and final. Particular judgment refers to the judging of the moral quality of one's life immediately after death (CCC 1022) and Christ determines whether the person has chosen fundamentally to either cooperate with God's grace or how one has chosen to reject God's grace. Accordingly, judgment is rendered and the person merits heaven, purgatory, or hell. Final judgment refers to that end time of history when Christ will return to this world bringing the fullness of the kingdom and sum up everything by passing definitive judgment on all people, nations, and history itself (CCC 679).

How does Christ judge, especially in light of the gospel message (John 3:17) that he has come not to condemn but that all might have life and be saved? The form of judgment is a revelation from the Lord who is the fullness of God's revelation among us. Each person will be revealed in this judgment and, thus, the judging has already been achieved by the way in which one lived. Hence, this feast's gospel image of the separation of sheep and goats indicating how one has lived in accord (or not) with the kingdom imperative of loving one's neighbor.

The final or last judgment also constitutes God's final word on all of history. Jesus Christ, the living Word, will reveal God's glorious triumph over evil and at the same time manifest the ultimate meaning of the whole work of creation. Till then, we believe that Christ is the hope of Israel and we, the Church, continue the Pentecost preaching of Peter that all embrace the

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Lord Jesus and his kingdom (CCC 674). Till then, we pass through trial and faith-shaking events-and yet we hold firm in the Lord CCC 675).

