

## 34th Christ the King

160 SMF20 Psalm Ps 23:1-2a, 2b-3, 5, 6  
Cor 15:20-26, 28

Ezekiel 34 11-12, 15-17 1

Matt 25:31-46

### RESPONSE: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

More than a hundred years ago, a Chilean priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts started a social movement which today we might call the civilization of Love. He was Mateo Crawley Bovey, SSCC (1880-1960), and he called his work the Social Reign of the Sacred Heart. Mateo's international preaching ministry came alive in the wake of the social justice teaching set forth by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). These teachings flow from the social values in the Gospel, and, expand in opposing oppression in its many forms. They provide a sturdy bridge to ecumenical and inter religious dialogue. Pope Francis follows in the same suit. It has taken me a lifetime to appreciate one of Mateo's books, *Remain in My Love* in this regard.

During the time that the church prayerfully repositioned its participation in modernity as a quest for social justice, the feast of Christ the King came into its own. With the renewed sense of the Liturgical year as a revelation of the story of our salvation in Jesus Christ, the feast became a marvelous way to celebrate our faith in what was once called the Last Things (death, judgment, heaven, hell: check EWTN on Web). The Feast probes the existential question, "What's it all about?" What do our lives finally mean?" To study the readings is to get absorbed in the active hope of God's glory played out in the key of social justice. In fact, in Corinthians, Paul gives a "Last Things" orientation to the journey of Psalm 23. "Goodness and mercy" lead the psalmist in a precarious life, as he or she walks through "the valley of the shadow of death," (v.4) to "dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (Psalm 23 v.6) Ezekiel and Matthew stand as points of departure and arrival of this journey. Enter Adam. "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor 15: 21-22).

For Paul the final procession into the realness of the post resurrection faith has commenced. "But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ," (v.23). Mary in her Assumption is part of this procession whose banner is "where Jesus has gone we hope to follow!" (Preface for the Ascension). Paul says about the final outcome that God in raising Jesus assured victory for all humanity: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death," (v.26). People had religiously interpreted the biological necessity to die as the result of sin. If sin is forgiven, death loses its sting. "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:54-55).

The promise of the Lord in Ezekiel to watch over the sheep has been fulfilled: "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness." (Ezekiel 34:11-12). But Ezekiel also understood that the sheep would be held accountable to respond to the action of the shepherd. "As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, rams and he-goats. (v.17) To read further on in Ezekiel is to admire Matthew's adaptation. The scene is set for the second of the "Last Things." Enter the sheep and the goats. Matthew's gospel is the handbook of the church, and, so, it is not unexpected that processes for the care of the community would be set forth. See already a process in view (18:1-35). The one who is recalcitrant is to be handed over to re-evangelization, treated like the pagan and the publican, the target of Jesus' own preaching (18:17. See 1 Cor 5:5). Judgment means justice, and the question is: have we been just to each other?

What are the criteria? Paul writes "Owe no one anything, except to love one another." (Romans 13:8) Do we owe love? To act on what we owe is to do justice. Do we do justice when we love? Do people have a right to our love? To conquer by love or be subjected to love? Was Jesus subjected to love? "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all." (1 Cor 15: 28) Mateo's best known book was entitled *Jesus King of Love*. There is our hope and the meaning of Christ the King: God is going to be Godself, God will be just to being God, God owes it to Godself to be God, and there's no salvation until we act in a way that lets God be God. "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them!" (1 John 4:16) That's

exactly the message of Matthew 25! It will be revealed to us that God abides in our loving compassion for each other. Fiat let it be!

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