

CHRIST THE KING

YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Lord, you are gentle
and do not ask us
to do more than we are able.
Give us the love
to see Jesus, your Son,
in the hungry and the thirsty,
in strangers and the poor,
in those who are sick
and criminals in prison.
Just as he died for those
who needed him most,
so may we work and pray
for the people
with the most troubles.
We pray this prayer
to you through Jesus
who lives with you,
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The people of Israel saw in their leader the role and function of both shepherd and king. David, for example, is spoken of as both shepherd (which he was) and king (which he became.) The role of the king was not only to rule but to guide, feed, and care for his people. God is also spoken of in shepherd imagery (e.g. Psalm 23.) Here in this passage God says, "I myself will shepherd my flock."

In the Gospel reading, the last judgment, Jesus is both Shepherd and King. He will judge between sheep and goats. The focus is on the *real* manifestation of our faith in acts of charity; on that we will be judged.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

What did you hear? Encourage the children to reflect back on what they heard without comment or question. Throughout the homily, try to bring in the things said by the children.

FIRST READING: *Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17*

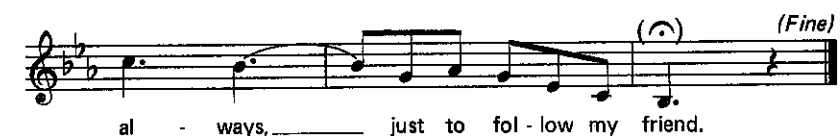
This is a reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

Our God says:

"I, myself, will take care of my sheep.
As a shepherd watches over the flock,
so will I watch over my sheep.
I, myself, will feed them and give them rest.
I will find those who are lost
and bring them back.
I will heal those who are hurt.
I will be a good shepherd to my sheep.
But remember, I will judge
between one sheep and another,
and I will judge between the sheep
and the goats."

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: *Psalm 23*



1. I have all I need. You are my shep-herd, your hand is with me.
2. When path-ways are dark, you are there guid-ing me, keep-ing me safe.
3. You give me to eat. You make me wel-come, you fill me with joy.
4. Your good-ness I know. Your love will be with me all of my life.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: *Matthew 25:31-40*

This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples,

"When the King comes in glory,
he will sit on his throne
with all the angels around him.
All the people of the world will come to him,
and he will separate them
just like a shepherd separates the sheep
from the goats.

Then the King will say to the sheep,

'Come and receive your share of the kingdom
which I have prepared for you.
For when I was hungry, you gave me food.
When I was thirsty, you gave me a drink.
When I was a stranger,
you made me feel welcome.
When I had nothing to wear,
you gave me clothes.
When I was sick, you took care of me,
and when I was in prison,
you came and visited me.'

"The people who hear these words will ask,

'When did we see you hungry and give you food?
When did we see you thirsty and give you a drink?
When did we take you in
and make you feel welcome?
When did we give you clothes to wear?
When did we see you sick or in prison
and come to visit you?'

"And the King will answer,

'When you do those things
for any of my brothers and sisters in need,
you do it for me.
And those who do these things
will live with God forever.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Who are the people Jesus shows concern for in this Gospel reading?

Help the children to see that all of these people are needy in some way and depend on others.

Can you think of other stories in the Gospel where Jesus showed special love and concern for the poor, the hungry, and so forth?

It is important that the children realize that this text is a summary of all that Jesus taught and did in his life. They should not get the idea that this is a judgment scene which will catch people off guard. Jesus was always identified with the poor, the outcasts, and taught his followers the same. Some people rejected him during his life on earth for this identification. Today's Gospel isn't God's acceptance or rejection of us but *our* acceptance or rejection of what Jesus taught and who he is.

Do we have people in the world, our city or neighborhood, who are hungry, thirsty or who need help?

Help the children to be as specific as possible here. Especially help them to identify those persons in their parish who do things for others.

What do you think Jesus means when he tells us, "When you do those things for any of my brothers and sisters in need, you do it for me"?

This is a difficult concept. The children may not be able to verbalize this truth yet, but reflection on it will nourish the seed.

Jesus invites all people, young and old, to meet him in the poor, the hungry, the lonely, strangers. How can we show our love and our faith in the words of Jesus?

It is most important that children be able to experience themselves responding in action to the Gospel. Children must also be invited to respond according to their capacity. Discourage responses from outside their capacity. For example, sending money to foreign places. Children should be encouraged to help directly and with their own means, e.g. welcoming newcomers to school, helping a child who is hurt or feels rejected. They should not feel guilty for the problems of the world.

What does Jesus say to those who do what they can for others? This is what the children should remember: that Jesus has prepared a place for his followers and wants us to be there.