

[Readings: Ez. 34:11-12, 15-17; Psalm 23; 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28; Matt 25:31-46]

As sons and daughters of God, we are made to be in communion with God and with one another. We make up a spiritual family. We are all members of the Kingdom of God, with Christ as our King. As the Catechism teaches, we are all called to the same end -- that is God. But, there is a certain resemblance between the human and the divine. "Love of neighbor is inseparable from the love of God" (CCC 1878). It is in living together as one that we respond to our vocation (CCC 1879), and that unity goes beyond each one of us (CCC 1880). Through this society, we are each established as "heirs" and receive talents to give back to our society (CCC 1880). So, as one Church, we come together as heirs, and as heirs, family; we come together to live in unity for the sake of Christ.

We are being called by God to come together as Families of Parishes. As you may have heard, our parish will be joining together with other parishes. These groupings will be announced by Archbishop Vigneron soon. It might be difficult at times, all change is. But it is clear that the Holy Spirit is moving us in this direction, at this time, in our Archdiocese. We have an exciting opportunity to unite as Church in a new way that will help us live out our Baptismal call to holiness as one, united Body of Christ. We trust in Jesus Christ, our King, to lead and care for us as we come together as Families of Parishes.

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes a parable comparing His followers to sheep. This is a common metaphor for Jesus, where we are His sheep and Jesus is our Good Shepherd. Today, Jesus explains that those who love Him will inherit the kingdom of God, sitting at His right and at His left in Heaven.

Remember that our Catechism teaches that we are "heirs". What are we heirs to, and who are we inheriting that from? What is so important that we inherit? In the Catechism and in this Gospel, we inherit the Kingdom of God. We inherit the eternal banquet of Heaven. To inherit, implies that one is a part of a family. As Christians we were reborn via our baptism into the family of God which is the Church. Thus, each of us are children of God and are brothers and sisters in Christ. When we treat each other as we would treat Christ, we do it to Him.

Jesus's words today remind us that we CHOOSE to follow or not to follow Him. On this feast day of Christ the King, we are especially reminded that Jesus is indeed the Lord of our lives. We are left with some big questions: Is Jesus really the Lord in my life? As a family of believers, is Jesus really the Lord in the life of our parish?

Sometimes it is easy to follow Jesus. Sometimes it isn't. Sometimes we are challenged in our discipleship in ways that we don't understand, or even in ways that we don't think we can accomplish. Jesus never said that it would be easy. But He promises that if we are faithful to the end, we will enjoy eternal life.

No one is on this journey alone. Families of Parishes will help us to work together as the people of God in our mission to unleash the Gospel. Not only as individuals, but as a parish family, we are invited and challenged to work out our salvation with Him, as St. Paul says, "with fear and trembling." Because we have been created to live in His Kingdom forever, we must begin living that Kingdom-centered life today!

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us in ways we never would have guessed. But, our mission of bringing all people to Jesus, our King, has not changed. We are still sent on mission, and joining forces with other parishes will strengthen us in that mission. We will be better equipped to lead all souls to Jesus as one family, so that all of us may sit at His right and at His left.

We have reached the conclusion of another year in the Church's calendar. At this gateway between the old liturgical year and the new one, the Church places the figure of Jesus Christ our King. Jesus is no typical king – someone of worldly might, power and glory who lords it over others. Jesus is a King Who SERVES those He rules. He is a King Who commits Himself to serve, to suffer, to die for all His people, but above all, for those who were – and are – in any kind of need. We remember that Christ our King is bigger than any pandemic, any political division, any racial disharmony and any military power. While the battle on earth continues, Christ will bring all things under His feet, under His rule!

That is why both today's First Reading and Gospel give us the figure of the shepherd: One Who watches over the flock and protects the sheep from

danger and attack, even at the cost of His own life.

At the judgment that follows your death and mine, we probably won't be asked the questions some people might be expecting: How many Masses did you attend? How many prayers did you say? How many sins did you avoid?

I suspect the questions we will be asked when we stand before God will be more like these: Did you truly and actually try to love God above all else?

Did you try to love each human being as God loved you while you walked on this earth? Did you treat each created thing, including creation itself, with the reverence, the respect and the restraint God asked of us from the beginning of the world? How much have you done for others?

How will we answer THOSE questions? Our answers will determine whether we end up dancing with the sheep or suffering with the goats.

Have you ever done something good to someone who didn't deserve it? How did this affect your relationship with Jesus? What abundance do you see in each member of your family or faith sharing community that, when shared, blesses others? What makes you come back to St. Martin de Porres for Mass?

If we want to inherit the Kingdom prepared for us since the dawn of time, the instructions are absurdly simple: Take care of one other. Love your neighbor. In doing so we participate in the love of God. THAT'S why we come back!

Families can be fun and beautiful. But they can also be messy and scattered. I once entertained having t-shirts printed for my immediate family members that says, "We put the fun in dysfunctional!" Even though this transition to Families of Parishes may be challenging, it is through our unity that we will best follow Jesus and lead all people to Him and to His Kingdom. That Kingdom begins now. This altar is His throne, and we are about to meet Him again in the Eucharist. Today, let us approach His throne with confidence, and then support each other on our journey to Heaven as one family in Christ. AMEN!