



ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133

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WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2023

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE - YEAR A

BEING THE GOOD NEWS ... BY PROMOTING GOD'S HOSPITALITY



Readings this week: Ezek 34:11 – 12, 15 – 17; Ps 22; 1 Cor 15:20 – 26, 28; Mt 25:31 - 46.

Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter

This week's gospel is the final passage in Matthew's gospel before the passion narrative – the death and resurrection of Jesus. As such, it provides a powerful end point to the teaching ministry section of the gospel. In many ways this passage can be seen as a summary of Jesus' vision for the Kingdom – a world in which the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked and the imprisoned are treated with respect and dignity as a child of God. This is exactly what Jesus himself did throughout his ministry and it is what all Christian people are called to do.

Like the virtuous people of the passage, there are many times when we do not know the good work that we do. There are many times when our positive interaction with another person can be the difference between hope and despair for that person – and we may never know the difference we have made in their life. The challenge presented by Jesus is that whenever we see a person in need our response to them should be as if we were responding to Jesus himself.

But what of the times we fail to respond to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked and the imprisoned? Who are they for us? ... That irritating person who we've never been able to get along with? ... That person who's just arrived in the country and can't speak the language properly? ... That kid who always looks dirty and nobody talks to? ... That girl who's no good at relating to other people and everyone avoids her? ... The homeless man in the street who asks for money? ... The asylum seeker fleeing their country who didn't go through all the right channels to immigrate? ... Lord, when did we see you, and not come to your help?

Scriptural context – Matthew 25: This week's gospel passage comes as the third in a sequence of passages that make up Matthew Chapter 25. The chapter addresses the gospel's intended audience who were caught in a time of uncertainty. Many had expected the promised return of the Lord within their lifetime and had seen the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE as a sign that the end of days was approaching. The three gospel passages speak of continuing to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom and the need to act in a way that works to bring about the reign of God in the world.

Have you thought? – Christ the King: This week's liturgy marks the end of the liturgical cycle. Next week begins the new year with the season of Advent. The liturgy is celebrated as the Feast of Christ the King – reminding us of a very imperial model of church and theology that reflected the structure of the Roman Empire and later, Feudal Europe. To have this reading on the feast of Christ the King is a powerful reminder of how Jesus envisaged the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, the Kingdom was not a rule of power and status but a rule of justice and peace for even the lowliest. It is an apt conclusion to the liturgical year.

Gospel Focus – The Final Judgment: Often referred to as 'The Final Judgment', this gospel presents an understanding of judgment and punishment that reflects the theology and culture of the first century. It is an image that has continued to dominate Christian art and theology for most of its history: the idea of God sitting in judgment on the final day and weighing up each individual's actions. It is often applied very literally and it is a dominant image of God represented in the media – TV sit-coms and movies often draw on the image. It is a literalist image of God that needs to be challenged. We must remember that the focus of the gospel passage is on the call to action for justice.

BEING THE GOOD NEWS

Whitehorse Deanery
Eastern Region
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 9.00am Australian

Vietnamese – 5.00pm

& SL: @ 8.30am & 10.30am

WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am

Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month

@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Tues. @ 5.00pm

Weds., Thurs. & Fri. @ 9.30am

Sat. @ 9.00am

RECONCILIATION

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &
5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed

for Adoration Wednesday

Start: 7.00pm | End: 8.00pm

MACS Catholic Primary School

21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic

Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones **Principal**

Email: principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

MACS Catholic Primary School

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan: **Principal**

Email: principal@slblackburnsth.catholic.edu.au

Website: slblackburnsth.catholic.edu.au

Prayer to Saint Timothy

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy with apostolic virtues, grant, through his intercession that, living justly and devoutly in this present age, we may merit to reach our heavenly homeland. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Patron Saint of stomach and intestinal disorders.

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

O St. Luke, you were chosen to reveal in preaching and writing God's love for the poor. Moved by the heavenly Spirit of Love, you detailed the life of Jesus, showing His divinity and His genuine compassion for all human beings. Help those who already glory in God's name to persevere in one heart and one mind and inspire all people that they may hear the Good News of Salvation. Amen

Patron Saint of artists, physicians, surgeons, students and butchers.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this weekend all who are sick, especially Max Marino, Caratha McKerrow, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue, Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Veronica and all those Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died recently especially John Fulton, Marjorie Price and Shiyamala Mahathevan, for the casualties of war in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially Mary Parslow, Maria Mariniello, Maria Casano, Ramanathan Jeyasingam, Lowerance Soundranajham, Arthur Grealy, Rev. Charles Mayne S.J., Vita, Felice and Minetta Boccacci, Eloide Leonardi, and Mary McEwan. R.I.P.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: **Ordinary Time ~ Thursday:** St Andrew, apostle; **Saturday:** Mass of the Virgin Mary. **Masses this weekend:** Preface of Christ, King of the Universe & Eucharistic Prayer II; Eucharistic Acclamation No. III.

SL SUNDAY MORNING MASS UPDATE: Please remember that we are moving to relocate our Sunday 10.30am Mass and will occur next Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent this year – 3rd December 2023 to Forest Hill.

ST SUNDAY MORNING MASS UPDATE: Please remember that Sunday morning Mass will begin next Sunday at 10.30am as of 3rd December 2023.

ST CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS are now on sale from the Piety Stall. St. Vincent de Paul Society cards are \$3.00 for a pack of 5, Magellan Cards are \$7.00 for a pack of 10 and the 2024 Columban calendars are \$ 9.00 each.

ST PARISHIONERS maybe wondering about receiving the Weekly Parish Newsletter electronically. The weaning process has been underway for a couple of years that offers access via the Parish Website <https://sttimothys.org.au/foresthill-bulletin> Please be advised that this will be the best way to access it moving forward.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY, BLACKBURN SOUTH CONFERENCE

– CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2023: Our Parish Conference is seeking your assistance with the Christmas Appeal – Christmas will look different this year for hungry families. Your generosity has always enabled us to provide assistance for people in the area who are experiencing hardship. Since the last Christmas Appeal, this has enabled us to provide assistance to 275 households delivering \$19,990 in Woolworths vouchers, \$3350 in Vinnies' store vouchers and \$2790 in donated food from you and the school. This year, the continuing rise in the price of essentials such as rent, food, and utilities will further disadvantage those struggling to make ends meet. Supporting our appeal will benefit the families we serve in this community. You can support the conference's appeal by donating in the envelopes which will be available next weekend, by placing your donation in the Poor Box at the back of the church, or by placing non-perishable items in the basket in the narthex. We are most in need of canned fruit, pasta sauce, packets of soups, small packets of rice and of fruit juices, small jars of coffee, small packets of tea bags, and long-life milk. St Vincent de Paul said that there are no people so rich that they have nothing to receive, and none so poor that they have nothing to give. We thank you in advance for your support of our work in the local community.

A SANCTUARY REMEMBRANCE BOOK is now available for any Parishioner to record a loved one's name, family member, Parishioner or someone you would like included in this month's Masses for the Faithful Departed.

A VOCATION VIEW: The Church year ends today. We can proclaim Christ as King because we sense our vocation as being members of Christ's Royal Family, called to serve God and one another.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "...whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers, you did for me." – Matthew 25:40 Most of us are generous when it's convenient for us. We are generous when we have the time or the money. But, real generosity is the opposite of that. It means giving of one's time, money, compassion, forgiveness or mercy when it's not convenient to us, when it's not on our schedule, but on the other person's timeline. (ST: Weekly First Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$154; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this week: \$240; Vietnamese Donation: \$207.15; SL: Last week's Church Stewardship Envelopes: \$766.25; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$689.25).

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Bernie Brennan
	6:00 PM ST	Rachel Grealy
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Melina Barcellona
	9:00 AM ST	Joelle Rousetty
	10:30 AM SL	Genevieve Hemsley
	5.00PM ST	Thuan Tran & Tuyet Nguyen

25 AND 26 NOVEMBER

2 AND 3 DECEMBER

Mia Perang
Maria Deayton
Darren McLean
N/A
V. Vinsonclero & A. Johny
Mai Le & Loc Le

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Godfrey Thong
	6:00 PM ST	Peter Naughtin
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Ian Holmes
	9:00 AM ST	Laura Cigana
	10:30 AM SL	Margaret Gearon
	5.00PM ST	Hoang Nguyen

25 AND 26 NOVEMBER

2 AND 3 DECEMBER

Anne Lobo
Owen Grealy
Megan McLean
N/A
Anico Yee
Hung Dinh

SLIDE OPERATORS

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Choir
	6:00 PM ST	Michelle Chen
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Megan McLean
	9:00 AM ST	Lee Min Yee
	10:30 AM SL	Manny Gonzalez
	5.00PM ST	Toan Tran

25 AND 26 NOVEMBER

2 AND 3 DECEMBER

Choir
Michelle Chen
Melina Barcellona
N/A
Lee Min Yee
Toan Tran

SL WELCOMERS 25/26 NOV

6:00 PM Volunteer
8:30 AM Janette Clark
10:30 AM Volunteer

SL CHURCH CLEANING

2 nd Dec. – Sonya's Team
Sonya O'Farrell, Rose Knight,
Joe Brogno & Netty Solomon

SL CHURCH FLOWERS

25 th Nov – Kate Skowronska
2 nd Dec – No flowers

HOSPITALITY THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY

SL WELCOMERS 2/3 DEC

6:00 PM John Ryan
9:30 AM Joe Brogno
10:30 AM Margaret Gearon

ST CHURCH CLEANING

9 th Dec. @ 2pm
Toan Tran, Dao Dinh,
Hieu Nguyen & Dieu Nguyen

ST CHURCH FLOWERS

Parishioners
ST COUNTERS
This week Team 6:
Peggy & Ngery D'Cruz
Next week Team 7:
Barry & Christine Silvester

NOVEMBER OFFERING ENVELOPES are available on the table in the foyer/narthex to remember those who have gone before us this month of November.

ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK: Fr Mark De Battista says that we're celebrating something that is yet to come, that Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Mother Hilda has a story of a dud toaster acting like God. Fr Tony Percy on doing a spiritual audit and being judged on whether we recognized Christ in people, especially in the needy, Fr Dave Callaghan says we get stuck in the wilderness because we doubt the promise that God has made to us, and Fr Mike Delaney on the God of big dreams. Plus, more great music!

MELBOURNE CATHOLICS: [Proclaim23 inspires and equips hundreds for mission](#)

MAJELLAN FAMILY MEDIA: [Domestic Violence](#)

CELEBRATING SUNDAY: 'Christians are Sunday People. What does that mean? Before we ask ourselves how we "[observe Sunday,](#)" we have to consider what we Christians actually celebrate on Sunday. The real and first reason for celebrating Sunday lies in the fact that on this day Christ rose from the dead. In doing so, he inaugurated a new age. For the first time someone returns from the dead and will not die again. For the first time someone has broken the bonds of time that hold us all in captivity. But Jesus did not pass quickly into heaven. He did not simply shed time as one might shed a worn-out garment; on the contrary, he remains with us. He has returned and will never leave us again. The feast of Sunday is, therefore, above all a profession of faith in the Resurrection. It is a profession of faith that life is good. Very early in the history of the Church Christians asked themselves: "Why did the Lord choose this day? What meaning did he intend to convey thereby?" According to Jewish reckoning, Sunday was the first day of the week. It was therefore the day on which God created the world. It was the day on which God ended his rest and spoke: "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3). Sunday is the first day of the week, the day of creation. That means, then, that Sunday is also the day on which we give thanks for creation ... Creation has been given us by God as our living space, as the scene of our labour and our leisure, in which we find both the necessities and the superfluities of life, the beauty of images and sounds, which we need precisely as much as we need food and clothing.' (Benedict XVI 'Benedictus')

by Promoting God's Hospitality **Parish Groups & Contacts**

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,
Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

ST: Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499
SL: Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

Baptism Preparation

ST: Mary Italiano 9412 8499

Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116
Andy Tran 0422 382 109

Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

Parish Collection Preparers

ST: Barry Silvester &
Michael Kawalevski

Stewardship Courses

SL: Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087
Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

Parish Pastoral Council

As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?

Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,
Darren McLean - 0417 774 504
Janette Clark - 9877 2292
Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

Parish History

SL: Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Whitehorse Deanery - Fr Gerard

Finance Committee

Bernard Negline
Parish Accountant

SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the
Parish Office - 9877 2292

Church Sacristan

ST: Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen
SL: Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

Church Housekeeping

ST: Margaret King 9412 8499

Church Cleaning & Flowers

SL: Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

Church Linen

SL: Beryl Kanagalinggam

Parish Garden Maintenance

ST: Des Connors, Leo Watson,
Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community
SL: Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Holy Communion to the housebound - Fr Gerard

Parish Choirs

ST: Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen
SL: Lina & Maria Mafi
0411 136 043

Parish & School Fete Committee

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Advisory Council

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188
SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Parents' Association

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188
SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

Parish Contacts:

ST: John McCoy

SL: Tony Lobo &
Steve Kilroe-Smith

Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon: How worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength and honour. To him belong glory and power for ever and ever.

Response to the Psalm: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David! Alleluia!

Eucharistic Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Communion Antiphon: The Lord sits as King for ever. The Lord will bless his people with peace.

ST & SL END OF YEAR BREAK-UP & THANKYOU to all Parishioners of both Parishes who provide a service/ministry in any way, in either or both parishes. BYO Drinks, nibbles and the Christmas spirit; chairs, tables, tea and coffee will be provided. It will be held at St Luke the Evangelist Parish Hall after the 6.00pm Saturday Vigil Mass on 2nd December 2023 from 7.00pm onwards, ALL PARISHIONERS ARE INVITED!

SL: 60TH ANNIVERSARY WINES FOR OUR PARISH: Please contact the Parish Office at your convenience. Bottle \$15, 2 Bottles \$25, 6 Bottles \$75, 12 Bottles \$140; (Will mix, red/white).

SL: MARGARET GEARON'S HISTORY OF THE PARISH & SCHOOL PART II is now available for @ \$15 each.

SAFETY STATEMENT: We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE - YEAR A

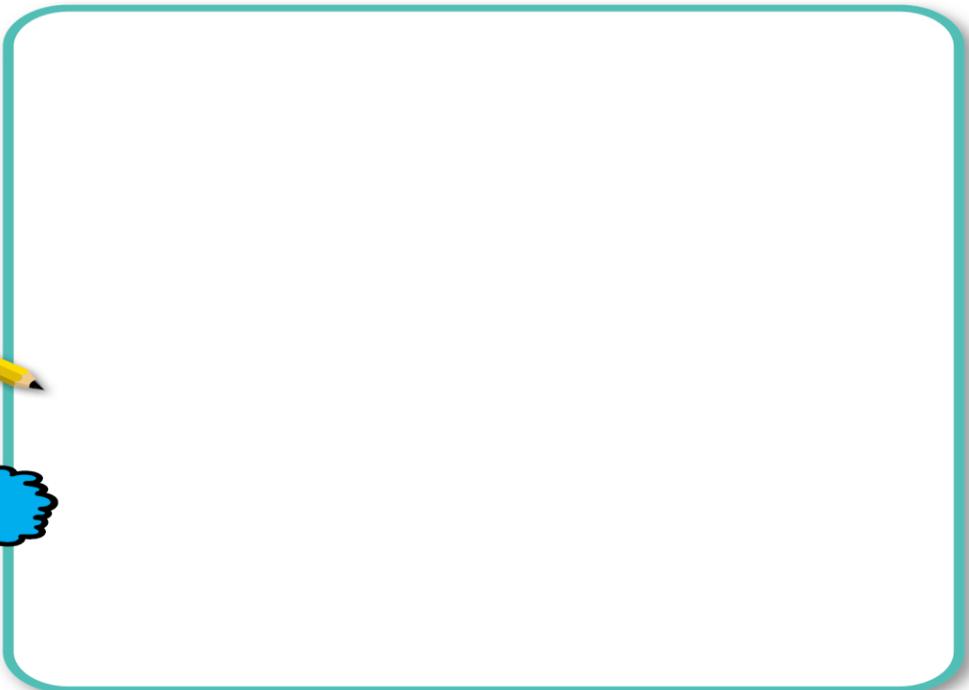
Come and receive the kingdom that is prepared for you

Mt 25:31-46
My name is

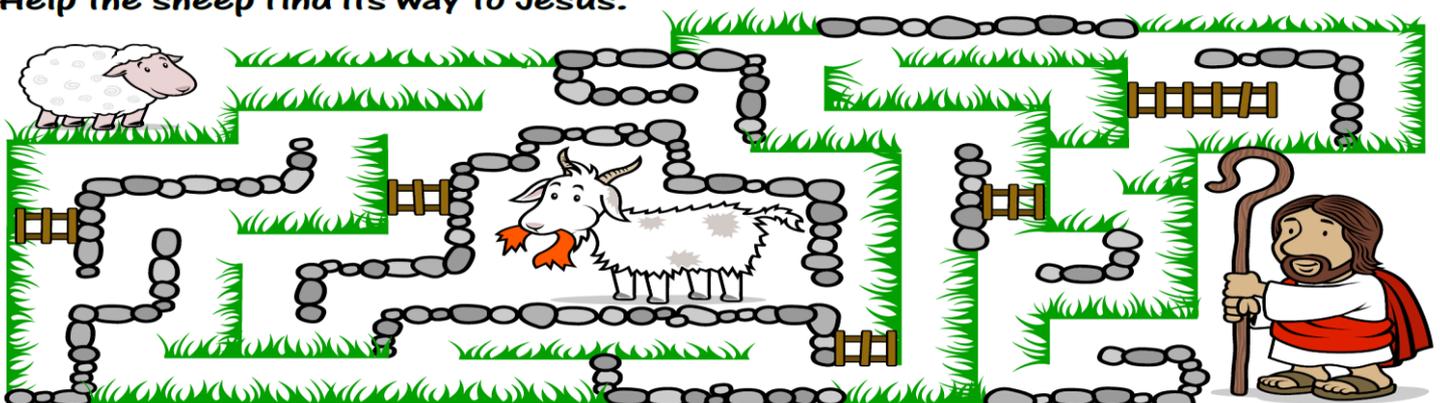


Jesus says when we do something good for others we also do it for him.

Draw a picture of yourself performing an act of kindness.



Help the sheep find its way to Jesus.

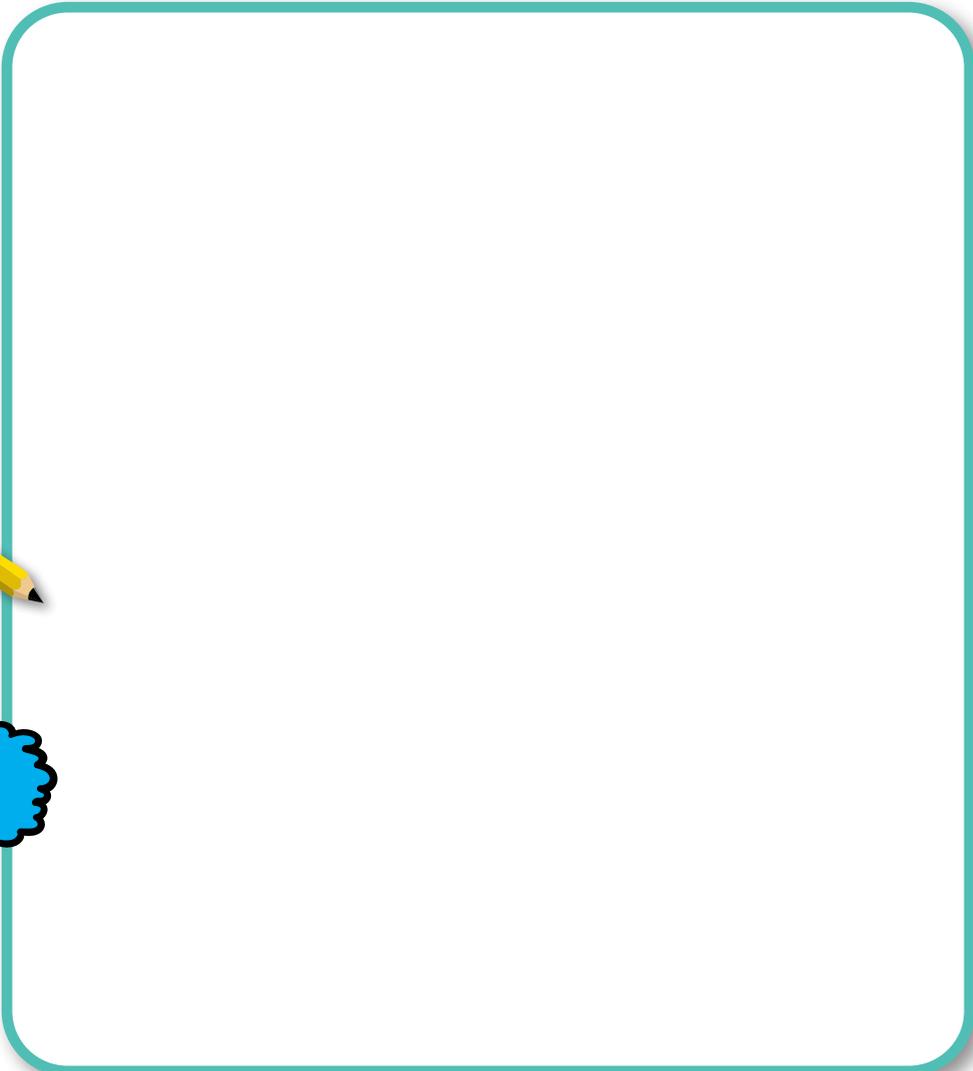


Come and receive the kingdom that is prepared for you

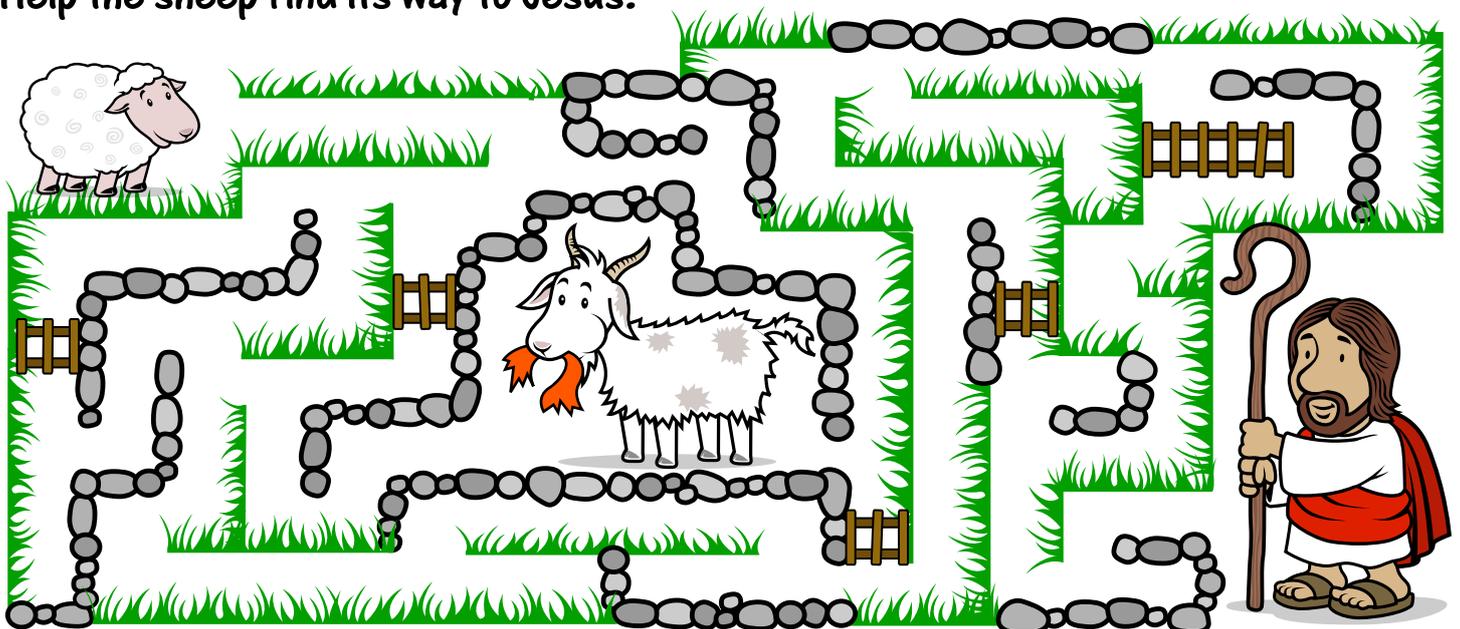


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Help the sheep find its way to Jesus.



SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Year A

26 November 2023



Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of the universe,
grant, we pray,
that the whole creation, set free from slavery,
may render your majesty service
and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

As a servant of the poor and of peace, Dorothy Day belongs among the sheep of today's gospel, but with a voice of her own. Here's what she wrote in June 1946:

"What we would like to do is change the world--make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute--the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words--we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever-widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbour, to love our enemy as our friend" (Cited in Robert Ellsberg ed. *Dorothy Day: Selected Writings*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005, 98).

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

34:11–12, 15–17

The Lord says this: I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view. As a shepherd keeps all his flock in view when he stands up in the middle of his scattered sheep, so shall I keep my sheep in view. I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness. I myself will pasture my sheep, I myself will show them where to rest – it is the Lord who speaks. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them.

As for you, my sheep, the Lord says this: I will judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and he-goats.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 22:1–3, 5–6

R. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose. **R.**

Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.
He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name. **R.**

You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. **R.**

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. **R.**

First Reading

It was common enough in the world of the Old Testament for rulers to be thought of as shepherds. In spite of the actual disparity between the life of the shepherd – physically demanding, lowly, exposed and unglamorous – and the opulent life of the overlord, both had the responsibility of protecting and caring for their respective flocks. Israel freely applied the metaphor of shepherd to their true ruler, the God of the exodus. Kings, therefore, were answerable to God in their role as shepherds of the people. The failure of kings to fulfil this responsibility led to the disaster of the exile and the end of kingly rule in Israel. Ezekiel therefore assures the returned exiles that God will once again be their true shepherd. Much of the reading exploits and expands on the metaphor. Incidentally, some translations, such as the NRSV, have God destroying, rather than watching over, the sheep that are “fat and healthy”. Whether justified or not, this rendition accords with the biblical theme of reversal so plainly expressed in Mary's Magnificat.

One of the shepherd's tasks, as the last verse explains, is to “judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and he-goats”. This mention of judgement, sheep and goats provides a verbal link with the gospel parable, but not much more. The substance of the reading, unlike the parable, is not about the moral judgement of the sheep but about the qualities of the true shepherd. As such it paints an appealing and encouraging portrait which readers have the privilege of presenting to the assembly.

Responsorial Psalm

This is the fourth time this year that Psalm 22/23 serves as the responsorial psalm, the most recent being on the 28th Sunday of the Year. This time it is formatted slightly differently, with the omission of four lines resulting in the more common arrangement of four four-line verses. The psalm has clearly been chosen in view of Ezekiel's oracle and the gospel parable. Much of the earlier commentary on the psalm is repeated here. The over-arching image in play is God as Israel's shepherd. The people's familiarity with the responsibilities of earthly shepherds made it easy to think of God in these terms. Just as shepherds ensured their sheep were kept safe and fed, so Israel's God protected and nourished the nation. Complementing the prime image of shepherding is that of hospitality. Generous provision for guests was (and remains) embedded in middle eastern culture. God may thus be readily thought of as a host who welcomes guests with scented oil and plies them with an abundance of food and drink. The buoyant spirit of the psalm is tinged with a realistic recognition of life's difficulties. Shepherds must lead their flock through “the valley of darkness,” while hosts provide for their guests “in the sight of (their) foes”. The principal challenge for readers is to pray this very familiar and much-loved psalm with fresh devotion. They will have served the assembly well if they give the impression the psalm has only just been discovered. They also need to take care with the two-part response and the two six-line stanzas. Thoughtful intonation and pausing will give the assembly the cues it needs to respond with confidence.

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

15:20–26, 28

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in the proper order: Christ as the first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him. After that will come the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must be king until he has put all his enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death. And when everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

25:31–46

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me." Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me." And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.'

Second Reading

The second reading is an excerpt from Paul's teaching on the resurrection of the dead, expounded at length in chapter fifteen of 1 Corinthians. It has some apocalyptic features and presumes some knowledge of Old Testament traditions.

The first of these traditions is the requirement that the first part of the harvest be dedicated to God in symbolic recognition of God's sovereignty (Ex 23:16). The second is the story of the first human being – Adam being both a personal name and a word meaning humankind – and the universal reality of death that followed on from the Fall. The third is God's promise of a royal ruler to whom all enemies would be made subject (Ps 109/110).

The risen Christ is thus the first-fruits of all who have died and as such the sure sign of their ultimate resurrection. Just as Adam brought death, so Christ brings life for "all who belong to him". And finally, having overcome all opposing powers, most especially death itself, Christ will entrust universal sovereignty to God the Father. It's striking that on this feast acclaiming Christ as Universal King we read that "the Son himself will be subject" to God the Father.

Given that many in the assembly are unlikely to be familiar with both the background to and the rhetorical style of Paul's thought, readers have a responsibility to prepare their proclamation well. The better they have grasped the threads of Paul's argument, the more likely they are to illuminate them for their listeners. As usual, the NRSV offers the text in inclusive language.

Gospel

Matthew alone records this vivid depiction of the last judgement. He adds immeasurably to its impact by making it Jesus' last word before the saga of his passion begins. While commonly called the parable of the sheep and the goats, it isn't strictly a parable but a prophetic vision that takes advantage of the familiar biblical metaphor of shepherding and builds on the visions of Daniel (7:13-14) and Joel (3:1-3).

As it's "all the nations" who are being judged, the story anticipates the parting commission Jesus will give to the apostles to "make disciples of all the nations" (28:20). It may be that the phrase "the least of these who are members of my family" (NRSV) originally referred to those Christian believers who ventured into pagan territory as missionaries. In this perspective, the nations are being judged on their welcome or rejection of the gospel. Nowadays the criteria for judgement are understood to apply broadly to all human beings, but most especially to those who profess to follow Jesus.

Earlier in the gospel (9:13; 12:7), Jesus had twice cited God's word spoken by the prophet Hosea: "What I want is mercy, not sacrifice" (6:6). The works of mercy in the judgement story elaborate on this saying. No doubt this gospel text will prompt many hearers to an examination of conscience about their care of the needy. A happier outcome would be their discovery that Christ is best found in the poor and the powerless.

Concluding Blessing

May almighty God always keep every adversity far from us
and in his kindness pour out upon us the gifts of his blessing.

Amen.

May God keep our hearts attentive to his words,
that they may be filled with everlasting gladness.

Amen.

And so, may we always understand what is good and right,
and be found ever hastening along
in the path of God's commands,
made coheirs with the citizens of heaven.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time V, Roman Missal p 716)



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