Reading for the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

King of the Universe.

22nd November 2026

First reading

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

'As for you, my flock, I judge between sheep and sheep.'

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, 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. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 23(22):1-2a. 2b-3. 5. 6. ℟1

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.
Near restful waters he leads me; he revives my soul.
He guides me along the right path, for the sake of his name.
You have prepared a table before me in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for length of days unending.

Second reading

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

'Christ delivers the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all.'

Brothers and Sisters: Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. 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. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

Gospel Acclamation **Mark 11:9, 10**

Alleluia, alleluia.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!
Alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 25:31-46

'He will sit on his glorious throne and he will separate people one from another.'

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from 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 welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me."

'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?" Then he will answer them, saying, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

Short reflection on the reading for today

A random act of kindness, a glass of water given out of goodness, seems like a very low threshold for a personal friendship with Christ. Christians have always had a strong trust in Christ's humanity; he was like us in every way except that he did not sin. Although this Sunday portrays him returning in regal splendour, the judgments of Jesus are not like ours either. He seeks good among the ordinary and the bad alike; too often we seek bad among the ordinary and the good alike. For Jesus, the sinner who does a single act in kindness can be saved. For the rest of us, the saint that does something wrong is tarnished forever.

His hands stretched out in forgiveness to those who had nailed them down. Ours stretch out to point in criticism at the wrongdoer. But we have a dominant image of what a judge is like and how a judge should act. It is not surprising that the image of Jesus as a *fair but stern judge* is deeply set with many Christians. There are even some who delight in the idea of bad people getting their just deserts.

Just as Jesus told the soldiers arresting him that his kingdom was not of this world; his standard of judgment is not of this world either. That should be good news, although not everybody sees it that way. Traditionally Christ has been represented as coming in majesty and power. From Michelangelo's ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to the mosaics in many a church apse, that image is prominent in western art. It is familiar because it is like what we do in every way, except that we don't forgive. The classic picture includes tormented souls being dragged off to eternal flames.. It is likely that almost all of us have an idea of some of the people who should be in that category.

In the 1970s musical Godspell, Stephen Schwartz recreated that judgment scene. Only, this time, Jesus has second thoughts and brings the damned along too. They had sung a song asking for mercy and they received it. That is an image which is very much in keeping with the words of Christ the King: "Judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven."