

First Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Today we celebrate the last Sunday in our liturgical year. A fitting end perhaps before Advent begins – the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Michael Dougherty from Whitehorse¹ wrote that the size of our universe is made up of two trillion galaxies – and our own the Milky Way galaxy holds as many as 200 billion other stars. My mind simply cannot fathom that and I must take Michael's words for it. Jesus Christ – King of the Universe also not so easy to comprehend – perhaps only if we look at it together.

Our readings begin on this day of celebration with Ezekiel writing about a great shepherd caring for his sheep; gathering them together and rescuing the lost ones – all those who are injured and weak. “I will feed my sheep with justice” says the Lord.

Paul speaks of how we will all be made alive in Christ – a part of this wondrous Kingdom that is his and the Father's. A kingdom that we are invited to think of as being alive today and not just some future place where we will all go when we die. A kingdom of God here and now that is as incomprehensible as is our universe; especially in light of what is happening in today's world. I look and silently ask; where is the justice that was promised by the Lord?

The Gospel is more in the manner that Ezekiel spoke of with the small ordinary things of everyday living – food, water to drink, clothes on our

¹ Living With Christ p.554

backs, health care for the sick, visiting with the abandoned ones in prisons. We are told if we do that for the least in the kingdom of God then we do it for God himself. It is no longer just about the doing by God, but how we are asked to become and live like the great Shepherd. There has been a subtle shift and it is with this shift that we become aware that to be a part of this kingdom – even now we must take on the role of the shepherd for those who are the poorest of the poor and seemingly abandoned. I am reminded for a moment of Jesus rolling up his sleeves to wash the feet of his disciples before feeding them. This seems to be what today's Gospel is inviting us to do, to be.

Ajit Costa, a young Oblate of Mary Immaculate commented that Pope Francis's encyclical - "FRATELLI TUTTI" was his way of "sharing his dreams and inviting all children of God to build a dignified, just and peaceful world through the process of building fraternity and social friendship."

Fratelli Tutti speaks to me in the ordinary of life – about justice, peace and the integrity of creation. These were the words that came to me as I began to write my reflection.

Looking at this in the light of the pandemic and how our world is filled with great suffering it seems that we are being offered the grace to realise and rediscover how we are called in the midst of our own suffering to be more than just the sheep. We are invited by Jesus to turn and walk with him as a shepherd, herding the sheep who are lost, who are hungry, who are cold, and who are unable to find a light at the end of their tunnels of life. This in a time where it is frightening to go outside of our own homes and risk

finding that virus invading our own bodies; or worse - the fear of spreading an invisible virus with others.

I think of how soon we have been promised a vaccine that hopefully will make the difference in how we find a way to live in the midst of COVID-19. But in our haste to make sure that we are okay and covered will we forget about the millions of people in other countries who may not have access to the vaccine. Can we share the little we have? I ask myself.

And I for a moment I am reminded of all who have lost their jobs, their livelihood, their ability to care for themselves and their families. It is tragic – but even worse is the thought that there are entire countries who are so in debt to countries like our own they will never be able to catch up or pay the debt.

I think again of Francis's dream and invitation to join together with all of God's children to build a world renewed.

He writes: "A journey of peace is not impossible... Its point of departure must be God's way of seeing things. God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart. And God's love is the same for everyone..." ...When the last days come, and there is sufficient light to see things as they really are, we are going to find ourselves quite surprised".

Gerald Darring's² article entitled "Humility Enthroned" states that: "The kingdom that we celebrate today is "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace."

I'd like to finish with a quote from the encyclical's Chapter 7 – Paths of Renewed Encounter that speaks to me of how we can be both Shepherd

² Darring, Gerald: Perspective of Justice, November 22, 2020 *Humility Enthroned*

and sheep: "Let our hearts be anointed with mercy, grace, humility, gentleness, and meekness; ...work together to recognize, protect and restore all persons' dignity, and ...build our home with a spirit of family bond." Amen.

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