

November 23 – Feast of Christ the King

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Ezekiel 34: 11-12, 15-17	God cares for God's sheep
Psalms 23: 1-2, 2-3, 5, 6	God is my shepherd, there is nothing I lack.
First Corinthians 15: 20-26, 28	Christ's resurrection is not an end in itself
Matthew 25: 31-46	In the final judgment those saved will be the ones who serve "the least of these."

Today on the Feast of Christ the King, the Scripture readings tell us about what sort of Kingdom Jesus came to establish. In Ezekiel's prophecy we hear of the "shepherds" (the political leaders of the time) who have fattened themselves on the best of the flock, while ignoring the weak, the sick, the injured, and leaving the others to be lost or prey to wild animals. But in the prophecy the Lord Yahweh is the Good Shepherd who will defend the flock, gathering the scattered lambs, feeding and caring for all, especially those most in need. At the same time the Good Shepherd, we are told, will demand an accounting of those shepherds who have abused and taken advantage of the sheep.

Here in our high mountain village of southern Mexico this image is right before our eyes. Our young neighbor Rosario spends her days as a shepherdess, taking her family's sheep and goats across the hills to the best pastures and protecting them against any harm. In each of the villages scattered across our hills and valleys, rural indigenous families are trying to continue farming on their small plots of land, passed down in their families for centuries, where they are part of a communal way of life that is still much valued. But the "shepherds" (top political leaders who have played into the hands of the international planners of NAFTA and other so-called "free trade" agreements) have allowed the mega-farm producers to reap enormous profits, while spelling disaster for small farmers in Mexico and other countries throughout the global South. The result is that more and more farming families have been pushed off the land, swelling the ranks of the immigrants, who must try to cross borders as a last resort to keep their families from starving.

Today on this Feast of Christ the King, the readings spell out the Reign of God and show us a kingdom almost opposite of the reigning system in which we find ourselves today. Matthew's gospel tells it for us so clearly: "I was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison, and you did not help me."

In a democratic country we have the option to choose our leaders (the shepherds) who will most closely help to bring about that Reign, that Kingdom that the prophets foretold and Jesus came to proclaim. Our Lord himself, the Good Shepherd, is asking for an accounting. How do we provide for the needs of the people: health care, education, job training, rehabilitation of prisoners, justice for all? How do we build the reign of peace that Jesus came to announce?

During this time of economic crisis, many people in the U.S. have fretted, understandably, about their financial resources. Shaken are the once-held beliefs in "market intelligence" where every dollar is slated to yield maximum profits. Nevertheless, how to make every dollar assure its highest earning is not what Jesus asks of us when he talks about the new reign of God. Nor is that the question which the planet asks of us in this

particularly significant point in history when we have been chosen to live and take responsibility for the future of the human race and the earth itself.

Two questions for our generation are:

- How can we develop a way of life that can sustain human life beyond this century without exhausting the life-giving capacity of the planet?
- How can we develop an economy that can reverse the concentration of the goods of the earth in the hands of the few, while assuring the common good and a future without suicidal resource wars?

Given what Jesus is saying about the nature of God's promised reign, we Christians should find ourselves leading the effort to answer these critical questions.

The fact is that if all the world's population consumed resources at the rate at which we do in the United States, the human race would not only exhaust the resources of the planet well before the end of the present century, we would need many more planets of resources. It is also true that the resources of the planet, and control over those resources is concentrated more than ever in the history of the human race in the hands of a few, a socially and politically unsustainable arrangement.

Nothing could be a stronger contradiction to the kind of world that Jesus describes as His reign.

For more information

To help keep God's reign of justice on your mind when you go to the voting booth, read Maryknoll's "Loving our neighbor in a shrinking world," a resource developed by Maryknoll missionaries who witness the global impact of U.S. political and economic decisions. Through this resource, Maryknoll missionaries encourage voters in the 2008 elections to scrutinize candidates' policy proposals through the lens of those who, both in the U.S. and overseas, lack basic necessities, endure the scourge of racism, live with gender-based discrimination or feel the immediate impact of climate change.

Email for a copy, or find the election guide here:

www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm

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