

LITURGY & LIFE
THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Cycle A

A Catholic Update Companion to the Sunday Readings

THE KING WE MEET IN THE LEAST

Gathered by the Shepherd • Raised in Christ • Judged by love • Sent to serve

1: FOR THE HOMILIST/PCL OR OCIA CO-ORD.: CHRIST SPEAKS - WE LISTEN

Sunday Readings

Liturgical Color	Green — Ordinary Time
First Reading	Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 23:1–2, 2–3, 5–6
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 28
Gospel	Matthew 25:31–46

The Heart of This Sunday's Gospel

THE KING SITS UPON HIS THRONE

Jesus reveals the final judgment through the image of the Son of Man separating sheep from goats. The decisive question is startlingly concrete: Did we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned? The righteous do not remember serving a disguised king. They simply learned to recognize need and respond with mercy. Christ identifies himself with the vulnerable so completely that love or neglect offered to them is offered to him. His kingship is not domination from a distance. It is the reign of a Shepherd who seeks the lost, gives himself for the flock, defeats every enemy, and asks his people to make that reign visible through merciful love.

The Liturgical Thread

Ezekiel announces that God himself will search for the scattered sheep, rescue them, feed them, bind up the injured, and judge between members of the flock. Psalm 23 celebrates the Lord who shepherds, restores, feeds, and leads. Paul proclaims the risen Christ who will destroy every enemy, including death, and hand the kingdom to the Father. Matthew reveals the measure of that kingdom: love made concrete toward those Christ calls “the least.”

THE MOVEMENT OF THE READINGS

The Shepherd seeks and gathers → The Lord restores and feeds → Christ defeats death and reigns → The King is encountered in the least

Listening With the Heart

Listen

Read Matthew 25:31–46 slowly. Notice the universal gathering, the separation, the surprise of both groups, and the repeated list of human needs. Listen for the King's identification with the vulnerable: “You did it to me.”

Reflect

Where is Christ waiting to be recognized in my ordinary life? Which person or group do I find easiest to overlook? Is my mercy personal, respectful, informed, and sustained? What does Christ's kingship ask me to change?

Pray

Adore Christ as King and Shepherd. Ask for eyes that recognize him in the vulnerable, courage to cross the distance between concern and action, and wisdom to serve in ways that protect dignity and build communion.

Rest

Rest in the promise that Christ gathers the scattered, tends the wounded, and destroys death. His judgment is truthful, but his reign is mercy. Allow yourself to be found, fed, healed, and sent.

Carry This Word

MATTHEW 25:40

'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

2: FOR THE CATECHIST: THE CHURCH TEACHES - WE LEARN

Catechetical Focus

CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND THE JUDGMENT OF LOVE

The Solemnity of Christ the King proclaims that all creation, history, power, and human destiny belong to Jesus Christ. Yet the Gospel defines his rule through self-giving love. The King is also the Shepherd, the Crucified One, the risen firstfruits, and the hidden Lord present in the vulnerable. Christian discipleship therefore cannot separate worship from mercy, doctrine from charity, or hope for heaven from responsibility toward the neighbor. The final judgment does not suggest that salvation is earned by isolated good deeds. Rather, works of mercy reveal whether grace has reshaped the heart into communion with Christ. To live beneath Christ's kingship is to allow his compassion, justice, and peace to govern choices, relationships, parish life, and public responsibility.

Catholic Update Resources

PRIMARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C2104A | Learning to See Through the Eyes of Mercy

This Update forms the spiritual vision required by Matthew 25. Mercy begins when the disciple allows Christ to change how people are seen—especially those overlooked, feared, judged, or reduced to a problem. The righteous in the Gospel do not perform mercy for recognition; they have learned a way of seeing and responding in which the vulnerable neighbor is received with reverence. This resource helps participants move from abstract compassion to a Christ-shaped gaze.

SECONDARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

C2001A | Understanding the Poor: Insight and Action

This Update deepens the Gospel's concrete demands by helping participants understand poverty beyond stereotypes and sentiment. It links attention, Catholic social teaching, human dignity, and practical action. Christ the King is encountered not in an idea of 'the poor' but in real persons whose lives are shaped by hunger, housing insecurity, illness, exclusion, migration, loneliness, and unjust systems. The resource invites informed, respectful, sustained solidarity.

The Catechist's Companion

Key Teaching

Mercy gives the disciple the eyes to recognize Christ. Understanding poverty helps the disciple respond wisely, respectfully, and concretely.

Session Aim

Help participants proclaim Christ as universal King and recognize that his reign becomes visible through mercy, justice, solidarity, and reverence for the dignity of every vulnerable person.

Formation Objectives

- Explain the Shepherd-King imagery linking Ezekiel 34, Psalm 23, and Matthew 25.
- Describe the resurrection and final victory of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15.
- Connect the final judgment with a life transformed by grace and expressed in works of mercy.
- Distinguish respectful solidarity from paternalism, stereotypes, or occasional sentiment.
- Choose one concrete personal or parish action that serves Christ in a vulnerable neighbor.

Integrating This Week's Catholic Updates

C2104A provides the contemplative foundation: disciples must learn to see persons through the eyes of Christ's mercy. C2001A provides the social and practical depth: poverty must be understood honestly so that action respects dignity and addresses real needs. Together they unite recognition and response, personal conversion and social responsibility, the King encountered in the least and the disciple sent to serve.

Expand the Conversation

- Why does Ezekiel describe God as both shepherd and judge?
- What is surprising about the response of the sheep and the goats?
- How does 1 Corinthians 15 expand the meaning of Christ's kingship?
- Why is mercy more than feeling sorry for someone?

Common Misunderstandings

- Christ's kingship is universal, but it is revealed through the humility of the Cross, the care of the Shepherd, and solidarity with the least.
- The works of mercy do not purchase salvation. They disclose whether grace has formed a heart capable of recognizing and loving Christ.
- "The least" are never merely symbols. Every person possesses God-given dignity, gifts, agency, history, and a claim upon the community's respect.
- Direct service and social transformation belong together. Feeding a hungry person and asking why people remain hungry are both Christian responsibilities.
- Those receiving care may also evangelize, lead, teach, pray, and serve. Christian mercy is reciprocal communion, not a one-directional relationship between superior and inferior.

Church References

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 544; 668–682; 786; 1038–1041; 1397; 1822–1829; 1931–1933; 2443–2449; 2462–2463. Scripture connections: Isaiah 58:6–12; Ezekiel 34:1–24; Matthew 5:1–12; Luke 4:16–21; Luke 10:25–37; Luke 16:19–31; John 10:1–18; Romans 14:7–12; James 2:14–18; Revelation 21:1–5.

OCIA Connection

OCIA participants may associate kingship with privilege, force, or political domination. This solemnity corrects those images by presenting Jesus as Shepherd, Crucified Lord, risen victor, and hidden companion of the vulnerable. Sponsors can help participants connect liturgical worship with the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, parish outreach, Catholic social teaching, and the examination of everyday attitudes toward people in need.

Catechist's Insight

PASTORAL CARE

Do not use Matthew 25 to frighten vulnerable people, imply that every need can be solved individually, or reduce salvation to moral performance. Many participants may themselves be hungry, ill, isolated, poor, displaced, or imprisoned by circumstances. Honor the dignity and agency of those who receive care, and avoid language that turns people into objects of charity. Teach both personal works of mercy and the social responsibility to address unjust conditions. The Church serves Christ in the least through direct care, advocacy, accompaniment, sacramental communion, and the patient building of relationships.

Begin with Christ's mercy before asking for action. Participants serve because they have first been sought, fed, healed, forgiven, and gathered by the Shepherd. Invite honest reflection on stereotypes, avoidance, compassion fatigue, and the limits of individual capacity. Offer concrete, accountable pathways for service. Emphasize relationship, listening, dignity, safeguarding, and collaboration with experienced ministries.

3: FOR THE CANDIDATE/CATECHUMEN: THE DISCIPLE RESPONDS - WE LIVE

Living the Gospel This Week

- Where have I experienced Christ as a Shepherd who searched for or restored me?
- Whom do I find difficult to recognize as bearing Christ's presence?
- Do I know the real needs of my local community, or only my assumptions?
- How do my spending, voting, work, and use of influence affect vulnerable people?
- Which work of mercy feels most urgent in my current season of life?
- What parish ministry or community partnership could help me serve faithfully?

Choosing to Be an Intentional Disciple

WHAT IS CHRIST ASKING OF ME TODAY?

Where is the King waiting to be recognized—and what act of mercy will make his reign visible?

Intentional discipleship places every area of life beneath Christ's reign. The disciple worships the King in the Eucharist and recognizes him in the hungry, stranger, sick, poor, lonely, and imprisoned. Mercy becomes attentive love; justice seeks the common good; hope trusts Christ's victory over sin and death. The disciple responds faithfully to the person and responsibility already near.

Holy Habit

THE MATTHEW 25 EXAMEN

At day's end ask: Whom did I notice today? Whom did I avoid or reduce to a label? Where did I receive the Shepherd's care? Did my words, choices, money, time, or attention feed, welcome, clothe, visit, or protect another person? What truth about poverty or vulnerability do I need to learn? Conclude: 'Christ my King, teach me to recognize and serve You in the least.'

Faith Into Practice

- Learn the names and stories of people served by a ministry.
- Offer practical help through a trusted local organization.
- Contact someone who is sick, homebound, grieving, isolated, or imprisoned.
- Examine a stereotype about poverty, migration, addiction, disability, or incarceration.
- Advocate for a practice that protects dignity and the common good.
- Pray Psalm 23 for someone who needs the Shepherd's care.
- Ask each evening, "Where did I meet the King today?"

Personal Reflection

Does my allegiance to Christ change the way I see and serve people whom society overlooks?

4: FOR THE SPONSOR: THE CHURCH SENDS - WE WITNESS

Sponsor's Path of Accompaniment

Share Your Faith	Describe a time when another person's mercy helped you recognize Christ's presence. What made the encounter respectful and life-giving?
Walk Together	Identify one local need and learn about it from people with direct experience. Discuss how personal service and social responsibility can work together.
Pray Together	Read Ezekiel 34:11–16 and Matthew 25:34–40. Pray for the Shepherd's eyes, the King's compassion, and courage to respond.
Experience the Church	Participate together in a parish or community ministry that feeds, welcomes, visits, accompanies, or advocates. Listen before acting.
Continue the Journey	Choose one work of mercy, one concrete person or ministry, and one sustainable next step. Review the experience together without seeking recognition.

Faith at Home

Place a bowl, towel, or small cross at the family prayer space as a sign of Christ the Servant-King. Choose one corporal work of mercy to practice together this week. Before acting, learn about the person or need; afterward, pray for those encountered and reflect on where Christ was present.

Parish Life

Celebrate Christ the King by connecting Eucharistic worship with sustained parish service. Highlight ministries that feed, welcome, visit, accompany, advocate, and address systemic need. Provide formation in Catholic social teaching and trauma-informed, dignity-centered service. Invite people who have experienced poverty or exclusion to help shape parish outreach rather than only receiving it.

Go Forth This Week

Bow before Christ the King, rise to recognize him in the least, and let mercy make his reign visible.

Prayer for the Week

Lord Jesus Christ, Shepherd and King, You seek the lost, heal the wounded, feed Your people, and conquer every enemy, even death. Reign in my heart, my home, my parish, and my choices. Give me eyes to recognize You in the hungry, the stranger, the sick, the poor, the lonely, and the imprisoned. Free me from indifference, fear, stereotypes, and charity that protects my comfort more than another person's dignity. Make my worship truthful, my mercy practical, my justice steadfast, and my hope

courageous. Gather all peoples into the kingdom You will hand to the Father, where love is complete and God is all in all. Amen.

Emmaus Insight

The King who reigns over all creation waits to be recognized and loved in the least of his brothers and sisters.