



THE LAST JUDGEMENT

(MATTHEW 25:31-46)

Portal of the last judgement of Notre Dame de Paris, France

We come today to the final Sunday in the Church's year. The Gospel presents us with a vision of the last judgement, when the Son of Man comes in glory.

We might note that all the (Gentile, that is, non-Jewish) nations are gathered before the throne of judgement. The charge sheet does not mention religious duties but rather social action, or lack of it. One way of looking at this text is to consider that it is dealing with the salvation of the Gentiles. The twelve apostles have been given the task of judging the twelve tribes of Israel; it is the place of the Son of Man to judge the Gentiles. The criterion is how the person has treated the poor, weak and vulnerable members of society. The surprise on the part of those who have shown mercy shows that there was no ulterior motive in their acting with compassion: it was simply the right thing to do for a fellow human being who was suffering. ■

REFLECT

St John Paul II once remarked that a society can be judged by how it treats its weakest members. Perhaps we might include in this category a range of vulnerable people: refugees, immigrants, unemployed people, those who are mentally ill, and so on. The common denominator in such groups, as in those mentioned in the scene of the last judgement, is that they are, in economic terms, non-productive and therefore regarded as not worth very much, "the undeserving poor" as the expression used to be. Yet they have needs, and perhaps the most basic need is to be recognised as a human being, as a person. Pope Francis has spoken of the importance of seeing faces rather than just a vast number of anonymous figures. The need to be loved, to be cared for, to have someone listen to one's story is greater than the immediate material requirements, as anyone who spends time visiting people who are sick or those in prison soon discovers.

The last judgement deals with human values. If this is applied to Gentiles, then it must be relevant to later Gentile Christians as well. But the purpose is not to paint a picture of the end of time, but rather to spur us on to examine our lives in the here and now. The Bible emphasises the importance of social justice and care for vulnerable and neglected people. In this teaching, Jesus is deflecting his disciples' attention away from himself and onto the suffering members of society. Not only is he to be found among them, he is actually identifying himself with them, just as he identified himself with those on the margins of social and religious life when he shared table-fellowship with them and scandalised the respectable people of his day. Those who minister to persons in need often say that they receive more than they give: those who attend to suffering and marginalised people just because they are suffering and marginalised will be surprised at the recognition they receive. ■

SAY

Whatever you do to the least of my brothers or sisters, you do unto me. (Matthew 25:40)

LEARN

The description of the last judgement is an apocalyptic vision rather than a parable.

Salvation for all people is presented as behaving in a decent human manner towards people in need.

Sheep and goats were often found in the same flock: goats needed more shelter at night.

DO

Find a way of helping someone mentioned in the list at the last judgement, or someone else who is in need of care or simple attention.



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.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

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.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 34:11-12.15-17

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 22

Response:

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

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he give me repose. (R.)
2. 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.)

3. 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.)

4. 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.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.28

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

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 their 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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!

GOSPEL

Matthew 25:31-46

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

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, 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?'
The 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."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice
by which the human race is reconciled to you,
we humbly pray

that your Son himself may bestow on all
nations

the gifts of unity and peace.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord sits as King for ever.

The Lord will bless his people with peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the food of immortality,

we ask, O Lord,

that, glorying in obedience

to the commands of Christ, the King of the
universe,

we may live with him eternally in his
heavenly Kingdom.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.