

A Royal Welcome

*A Missionary Commentary on the
Sunday Readings*

Sunday Readings

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Psalms 23:1-2a, 2b-3, 5, 6

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

[USCCB link to the Sunday Readings](#)

On the morning of September 11th, 1973, Chile was herded into a long period of brutality and darkness, and divided into friends and enemies of the military regime. The disdain of the dictatorship for the Church only grew during the 17 years of oppression and violations of basic human rights, and many catechists, Catholic youth leaders, Catholic labor leaders, clergy and religious women and men were exiled, tortured, suffered and died alongside the masses of Chileans regarded as subversives and “humanoids”—the dehumanizing term often used by the regime for their critics.

How often, in Chile, we rushed to locate someone arrested and taken from their homes late at night, before they disappeared, and found allies and friends who helped us! They often turned out to be people who were looking for their own arrested relatives and friends, over months and years, during those dark times! People who never went near a church began to flock to our parishes and chapels, grateful for the islands of freedom we offered there, and for the lawyers, psychologists, medical personnel and other professional services the Church offered them in their darkest hours.

Jesus’ teaching in today’s Gospel regarding those who welcomed the messengers of the Good News, and thereby established a close relationship to himself, reminded the early Church of how important such acts of hospitality and friendship were to the task before them—to continue the mission of Christ in their own time, before he returned as King of the Universe. Such actions and attitudes of strangers would make these friends into members of the flock of his own sheep.

Our Lord will someday speak to them, we believe, with gratitude, for how they treated the many victims of hatred in their own lifetimes, and their friendliness to his messengers sent among them, in whom Christ himself was present. May we ever trust in this presence as we go forth to share the Good News in the way we live, especially in the tough times.

next page

continued from previous page

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

After years of corrupt leadership of the flock of Judah, even during its 70-year exile in Babylon, centuries before Christ, Ezekial prophesizes that God himself will shepherd his people, care for the injured and sick, and lead them back to their homeland, giving hope to the remnant of the nation.

Psalm

The comforting shepherd is a universal image of the king in the ancient world, emphasizing leadership and providence for his subjects, a ruler who gives lavish banquets on special occasions.

Second Reading

Saint Paul reveals the implications of Christian belief in Christ's Resurrection; if Christ has been raised from the dead, all the faithful will be raised as well.

Gospel

The king of this judgement scene separates people like sheep and goats, just as Palestinian shepherds do at the end of each day, bringing the goats together in a shelter while allowing the sheep, warm in their coats of wool, to spend the night outdoors. Sheep are the more valued of the two groups, and symbolized those who have treated the members of the Christian community, sisters and brothers of Jesus' spiritual family, well during their mission journeys.

*Notes and commentary by Fr. Bob Mosher,
a member of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban.*

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