The Solemnity of Christ the King - Year A – 11/22/2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

First Reading – **Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17:** The Lord God promises to act as a shepherd to his scattered flock. He will rescue, pasture, and give them rest. He'll seek the lost, return the strayed, heal the sick, and bind the injured. He will also judge between the different kinds of sheep in his flock.

Responsorial Psalm – **Psalm 23:** The LORD is my shepherd who meets all my needs, guiding and sustaining me. I will dwell in his house forever, surrounded by his goodness and kindness.

Second Reading – **1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28:** Christ has risen, initiating the resurrection for all. He'll reign until all enemies, including death, are defeated. Ultimately, everything will be subjected to God.

Gospel –**Matthew 25:31-46:** Jesus tells his disciples about the final judgment where people will be separated like sheep and goats. Those who helped the needy will inherit eternal life, being told that their good deeds were done unto Jesus himself. Those who neglected the needy will face eternal punishment.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

SOLIDARITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD OUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS

A Story: The great Russian author Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was also a devout Christian. He reflected deeply upon the demands of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and strove to live his life in accordance with them. One day, while he was out for a walk, a beggar stopped him to ask for alms. Tolstoy searched his pockets for a coin but found none; with a look of regret, he said, *"Please don't be angry with me, brother, but I have nothing on me. If I did, I would gladly give it to you."* At that moment, the beggar's face lit up with joy. *"You have given me more than what I asked for,"* the man replied. *"You called me 'brother'!"*

On the final Sunday of the Liturgical Year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Christ the King. This serves as a preparation for the people of God to joyfully await the day when Jesus Christ, the King, will reign in full—the day that marks the end of this life and the moment of the Last Judgment, when the Merciful King, the King of Love, shall appear in glory.

In today's Gospel, Jesus evokes the image of the Last Judgment to teach us to live in a spirit of mutual care and compassion for everyone. This sense of solidarity and responsibility toward our fellow human beings—expressed through acts of charity and almsgiving—is the fundamental criterion upon which we will be rewarded or judged at the end of time; a standard that Jesus makes clear to us here and now.

1. A Decisive Distinction

There will be a clear separation into two groups—the righteous and the wicked, likened to sheep and goats. There is no room for a lukewarm, half-hearted state—being neither hot nor cold, neither sheep nor goat.

In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John records the Lord's words to those who live in such a lukewarm, half-hearted manner: "I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

Many people today approach their faith in this very way—neither fully sheep nor fully goat—living a "hybrid" existence, straddling the line between the secular world and the life of faith, desiring both the Lord and worldly wealth.

Just as the Lord will render a definitive judgment upon us at the end of time, He also calls us to make a clear, decisive choice in how we live out our faith today.

2. A living reality, not an abstraction.

Charity requires action, not theory. Jesus lists six very concrete situations—essential human needs, rather than lofty or abstract concepts: hunger, thirst, being a stranger, illness, nakedness, and imprisonment. In other words, those we are called to reach out to are the very people who need us most. This echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke? Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the homeless poor into your house; clothing the person you see to be naked, and not turning away from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58:6-7).

Most remarkably, Jesus identifies Himself with those in such unfortunate circumstances. The plight of these suffering individuals is an embodiment of Jesus Himself, offering us an opportunity to encounter Him: "Truly I tell you, whatever you failed to do for one of these least ones, you failed to do for Me."

When we consider the perspective of the Final Judgment, both the righteous and the unrighteous might assume that King Jesus would ask: "Whose descendant are you? What is your profession? What rank or position did you hold? Were you highly educated or illiterate? How many prayers did you recite, how many pilgrimages did you make, or how many churches did you help fund or build…?" Yet, unexpectedly, the King asks only: Did you share what you had with the hungry, the destitute, the stranger, or the imprisoned? In the end, those who "ate the flesh of the Lamb"—though they could not recall how many times they had partaken or the exact quantity consumed—found that the Spirit revealed to them a truth: they had never failed to share with their neighbor. A "blessed mistake," indeed—for the error made by those on the King's right hand was truly a fortunate one.

In short, as Jesus affirms in today's Gospel, acts of charity and almsgiving toward our fellow human beings are, in fact, acts performed for the Lord Himself. Demonstrating solidarity through such deeds plays a decisive role in our salvation when we stand before the judgment seat.

Lord Jesus Christ, King of Love,

You have identified Yourself with the lowly and the unfortunate—those we encounter along life's path who await the generosity of our hearts. Open the eyes of our souls, that we may recognize You in them and be ever ready to share according to our means. Amen.