

FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING (11/22-23/2008)
THE THIRTY FOURTH AND FINAL SUNDAY OF THE LITURGICAL YEAR
Ezekiel 34/11-17, Psalm 23, 1 Corinthians 15/20-2, Matthew 25/31-46

The recently completed campaign for the presidency focused very much on the leadership qualities of the main candidates.

Along with weighing their respective stands on the important issues, we voters wanted to know whether these two men could provide good leadership in a time of turmoil.

With Mr. Obama in office, we shall wait and see whether our collective choice was a good one.

This feast of Christ the King is also about leadership, but not about power as the world understands it. It's about leadership in service.

Here at Mundelein Seminary, the formation program is geared to produce priests who are servants of their people, in imitation of the example of the Lord.

That message is drilled into the men from the first day of their presence here.

And it is the last thing they hear as they prepare for ordination.

It's all about service.

In the end, whether the training we provide is successful will only be assessed by the people whom these newly ordained priests will be assigned to serve.

In the first reading from *Ezekiel* today, the Lord God criticizes the work the so-called shepherds or leaders of the people of Israel had provided.

As a solution, God announces: "*I myself will look after and tend my sheep.*"

The Lord will show us how it is done.

The Psalm, Psalm 23, sings a song of praise for God's shepherding: "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...He guides me in right paths...my cup overflows...and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.*"

The Gospel message, Jesus' lengthy metaphor about the final judgment, is one of the most vivid and challenging in the New Testament.

The Lord's criteria for entry into the eternal Kingdom is laid out clearly for us readers.

How do we treat the "little ones", the people who usually escape our attention, the people who live among us and often repel us with their awful neediness?

The Son of Man, in Jesus' metaphor, will sit in judgment.

There will be no more opportunities to change, no saying, "I'm sorry but I'll take care of that first thing tomorrow."

The die will be cast; the decision will be irrevocable.

If we have fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, tended the ill, visited the imprisoned, then our lot will be with the Lord for all eternity.

If we have not done the above, whether through oversight or through malice or just not recognizing who it was we were serving, then tough luck!

The passage makes it all seem so simple.

Just do what is necessary to help others, especially the most needy.

The rest will take care of itself.