

Do you know how much Christ wants to serve you? I think many times as Catholics, we can overly focus on what *we need to do for God* and we tend to forget that our faith rests on what *God has done for us* and *what He continues to do for us!* We forget that our entire Catholic faith is a *response* to God's love and mercy continually poured out to us through Christ our Savior and His Catholic Church.

Certainly, our Catholic faith is a personal relationship with Christ *in and through* His Church, and so like every relationship, it's a two-way street: we are invited to love God in *return* for the love He has first shown us. And yet everything we do out of love for God and others is *always* a response to what *God is doing for us* through His grace. Our first step towards God is *always* a response to His grace and unconditional love for us, which is greater than anything we can imagine. God *always takes the initiative* to reach out to us in love, mercy, and compassion – God *always takes the first step toward us*.

Today we celebrate the great Feast of Christ the King, also known as the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Now while every mass is a celebration of God's initiative and what He has

*first* done for us and wants to *continue* to do for us, this Feast, especially in the Liturgy of the Word, magnifies God's burning desire to serve us.

Today's feast reminds us that our Lord Jesus is not your stereotypical "king" as many may understand the identity of a king in the context of human history and popular culture. The King of the Universe doesn't rule with an iron fist nor does He govern as a tyrant with some selfish desire for power and domination. Our Savior's Kingdom doesn't even belong *primarily* to this fallen world, but rather to another world, a Heavenly realm that transcends space and time. Our King's throne is a *wooden cross* and His crown consists of *thorns* that painfully pierce one's flesh. Our King reigns through heroic, self-sacrificing love and humility and He doesn't identify Himself with powerful figures—rather, as He says in today's Gospel, our King identifies Himself with the lowly, the marginalized, the weak, the forgotten, and the rejected.

*Ultimately, our Lord Jesus reigns as King through service as our Savior!* Do you know that Christ wants to serve you? Our King emphatically declared, "For the Son of Man did not come *to be served*

*but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45).

How does Christ our King want to serve us?

Well He explicitly tells us in the beautiful first reading today from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament: “Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep. As a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep, so will I tend my sheep. I will *rescue them* from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. I myself will *pasture* my sheep; I myself will *give them rest*, says the Lord GOD. The lost I will *seek* out, the *strayed I will bring back*, the injured *I will bind up*, the sick I will heal...” Not only did our King do all of this during His public ministry on earth, but He accomplishes *all of this and more* through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, which are His ultimate acts of service.

As He tells us in Ezekiel, our King is a Shepherd—*He is the Good Shepherd* and if we *allow* Him to shepherd us as our King, then in the beautiful words of the Responsorial Psalm, *we’ll never want for anything!* “The Lord is my shepherd; *there is nothing I shall want.*”

The Responsorial Psalm, which is taken from the famous Psalm 23, is so

powerful – we’ve heard it a million times and yet we tend to take its words for granted: “The Lord is my shepherd; there is *nothing* I shall want.” What does this actually mean? This means that with our Lord Jesus as our King and Shepherd, we have *everything we need for our holiness, our happiness, and our salvation*. Listen to the words again: the Lord is my shepherd, there is *nothing* I shall want. In other words, Christ as the Good Shepherd, Christ as my King, gives me everything I truly want and need! *He* is the answer to all of my prayers! What else do I need besides Christ the King?

Brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus wants to *serve us* as our King by giving us what we truly want and need in the depths of our being. I’m *not talking* about money and material possessions—I’m talking about love, happiness, freedom, and peace. Through His Church, Christ comes to us in our brokenness and misery and lifts us up, filling us with His divine life and satisfying our deepest desires for authentic freedom and happiness. If we’re truly unsatisfied with Christ, then that’s *all on us*—if we’re seriously unsatisfied with Christ and what He’s offering to us, then we *may not even know Christ as He is!* If we’re dissatisfied

with Christ, then we're not opening our lives to Him as He desires! Any dissatisfaction with Christ can *never be attributed to Christ*, Who is Life, Love, and Truth Itself! If we're dissatisfied with Christ, then we're *not receiving and accepting* all that He wants to *give us* and *do for us* as our King! Do we allow Christ to love and serve us as our King and Shepherd? Do we ask for the grace to receive and accept all that He wants to give us and do for us? Or are we stubbornly closed off to Him and refusing to let go of those things that prevent Him from saving us and satisfying us?

In today's Gospel, *Christ the King calls us to do for others what He has already done for us!* Our Savior wants us as His disciples to love *as He loves* and to be merciful as *He is merciful!* In the literal sense of today's Gospel, our Lord Jesus is calling us to see and love Him in others, especially the weakest and most vulnerable among us. Yet we would be blind to the deeper meaning of this passage if we refused to recognize that *Christ already does this for us!* "For *I* was hungry Lord and *you* gave me food, *I* was thirsty Lord Jesus and *you* gave me drink, a stranger Lord and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me Jesus,

ill and you cared for me Lord, in prison and you visited me Lord Jesus.”

Do we realize what Christ the King has done for us in our life and continues to do for us? Brothers and sisters, our King loves and serves us in *so many ways*: through His Church and Her teachings and sacraments, through prayer, through the authentic love and goodness of others, especially our family and friends, through random acts of kindness and compassion, etc.

After Christ the King washes the feet of His 12 Apostles at the Last Supper, which was an extraordinary act, He solemnly instructs them saying, “If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed *your* feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, *so that as I have done for you*, you should also do” (John 13:14-15). In Luke’s account of the Last Supper, our King emphatically declares, “I am among you as the one who serves” (Luke 22:27).

Brothers and sisters, do we *allow* Christ to be our King and Shepherd? Do we *allow* Him to love and serve us in our life? If we allow Christ to reign in our hearts and lovingly serve us as our King,

then we will be better able to love and serve others, always remembering that whatever we do for the least of our brethren we do for Christ.