

CELEBRATING AT HOME

FEAST OF CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Being the living presence of God (Matthew 25:31-46)

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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.
We are gathered with the whole Church in this moment of prayer.

Preparing to hear the Word

Lord Jesus,
you are our Way.

Lord Jesus,
you are our Truth.

Lord Jesus,
you are our Life.

Lord Jesus,
constantly rebuild our faith, hope and love and shape us into your living presence.
Amen.

Scripture Reading *(Matthew 25:31-46)*

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 see you 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.'

Then he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, 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, lacking clothes 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 lacking clothes, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "In truth I tell you, 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 upright to eternal life.

Reflection - *Being the living presence of God*

Only Matthew tells us this story of final judgement in the Kingdom of God. He paints a picture of the glorious arrival of the King and the assembly of all the nations of people who are then separated into two groups, sheep and goats.

Judgement is then pronounced - not on the basis of physical beauty, wealth, power, status or even religious practice.

What determines who will inherit the eternal life of the Kingdom are the works of service done to fellow human beings in need: the hungry, the thirty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no mention in the list of religious duties like prayer, liturgical worship, fasting, giving tithes or indeed any identifiably religious practice.

Very likely these things are presumed to be present in all the assembled people. But, the difference between the two groups is how they responded to fellow human beings in need.

At the end of the day, the disciple is called to be the Kingdom (living presence) of God in the world and to transform the suffering of its people into joy by deeds of loving kindness. The goats appear to have made horrible situations suffered by human beings worse by their neglect, their lack of love.

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The virtuous disciple is the living presence of Jesus in the world. He or she realises that Jesus has entrusted the kingdom into his/her hands. In the Kingdom of Jesus, the disciple is not master but 'servant' - remember how frequently we have heard about the first being last and the last first?

The whole idea of 'kingdom' has been thoroughly re-written in the teaching of Jesus: there is only one master and you are all brothers... The disciples are indeed kings – they have the power of Jesus' spirit in them. But this power is not to be exercised in the classical sense 'having power over others', but by being true servants. The power of the spirit of Jesus fuels deeds of loving kindness for the brothers and sisters of Jesus – reversing horrible human conditions, and bringing healing and salvation.

This is, once again, a 'warning' parable for disciples to make sure that they are living the life of the Kingdom properly. It is not meant as a 'prophecy' about the last day. It is meant for careful consideration by the disciples in their attempt to live the life of the kingdom which has been entrusted to them.

Disciples of Jesus are not to repeat the mistake of the Pharisees in objectifying faith in God and reducing it to external observance.

Disciples are to seize the life (grace) of the Kingdom within them, to work industriously with this great gift so that the life of Jesus at work in them overflows into deeds of loving kindness; so that, becoming one in heart and mind with Christ (as St Paul puts it), the disciple becomes Christ in his/her moment of history - seeing, thinking and acting as Jesus would.

Prayers of Intercession

Fill us with courage
as we carry the Kingdom into our world.

You are the centre and source of our lives.
Help us be the reign of your life.

God of hope,
through your life at work in us we can redeem and renew our times.

Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Closing Prayer

Lord, God,
grant that we may recognise you
and serve you in each other.
With the Spirit of Jesus in us
may we continue to be your calm, loving,
healing presence in our world.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

Bless us, O Lord,
and remain with us for ever. **Amen.**



This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.

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