

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEACONS

Christ the King – Year A God's Master Plan

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Christ the King is the feast we celebrate to conclude the church year, reflecting on the Corinthians reading (*1 Cor 15:20-26,28*) about Christ gathering the kingdom at the end of time for presentation to God the Father and also the Matthew gospel (*Matt 25:31-46*) indicating our judgement criteria. St Paul, the writer of Corinthians, initially expected the world to end soon but later recognised it might not. In the United States, I have witnessed marchers carrying placards announcing “the end of the world is nigh”, claiming to have a blow-by-blow account of God's master plan for the end of the world. But Jesus discourages us from wasting time on such speculation (*Matt 24:36.4*). Instead, he leads us to a deeper understanding of God's Kingdom, of his hopes for us and promises to return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Though we don't have all that much detail about the “end of the world” or “the last Judgement”, scripture and church teaching tell us of Heaven to which we aspire, Purgatory, where we may be purified if we die not entirely prepared for heaven, and of Hell, the option of rejecting God's kingdom in our free will. In Matthew's gospel imagery, Jesus, our universal king, ultimately judges our fate. On the one hand we should rejoice because we know he loves us absolutely, infinitely and intimately. But on the other, how have we shown our love for him?

When Pope John XXIII was asked, “Why do you keep talking on love?” He replied, “Because Jesus told us that it is on love that we will be judged”. Christ the King, the judge, doesn't demand we jump through confusing hoops or have a clinical understanding of end times. Simply this: that we have loved him through concrete acts of mercy to those around us who are less fortunate.