THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Alcoholism and addiction can make another person's suffering fill our whole field of vision. We watch closely because we care, and before long our days can become organized around what they are doing or failing to do. The Solemnity of Christ the King asks us to look again. Christ is King, yet Sunday's gospel reveals His kingship through people who are vulnerable and in need.

Jesus describes the Son of Man separating the nations as a shepherd separates sheep from goats (Matthew 25:31–46). Those welcomed into the kingdom are surprised when He says, *"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink."* They ask when they ever saw Him in need. Jesus answers, *"Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me"* (Matthew 25:35, 40).

Family recovery teaches us to recognize need without assuming that every need is ours to meet. A loved one may be suffering, and compassion calls us to respond. At the same time, rescuing them from every consequence can keep both of us trapped. Mercy respects another person's dignity and responsibility. It asks what kind of help serves life rather than what will quiet our fear in the moment. This balance takes practice, and fellowship helps us learn it without shame.

Before we offer care, we remember that Christ first cares for us. In the first reading, God says, *"I myself will look after and tend my sheep"* (Ezekiel 34:11). Many family members arrive at a meeting exhausted from trying to hold everything together. Someone listens without judgment and helps us see that our life does not have to remain organized around another person's addiction. The care we receive becomes the pattern for the care we offer.

Step Ten helps us examine how we are loving. Continuing to take personal inventory can reveal when concern has slipped into control or when resentment has made us cold. It can also show where we have ignored our own limits until exhaustion turned into anger. When we are wrong, we admit it promptly and make repair without taking responsibility for what belongs to someone else.

This inventory keeps mercy from becoming either indifference or overinvolvement. We are not called to turn away from suffering, but neither are we asked to become another person's savior. Jesus already holds that place. Our task is to respond faithfully to what is actually before us and then release the outcome to Him.

The gospel also invites us to recognize Christ in people we struggle to see clearly. Addiction can reduce a loved one to a problem that must be solved. Family recovery helps us remember that the person still bears God's image, even when trust has been damaged. We can honor that dignity while maintaining boundaries and speaking the truth.

Service within fellowship protects us from becoming isolated in our own family story. A newcomer may need someone who understands the confusion of loving a person who is not yet willing to change. Offering steady presence can become an act of mercy, provided that service grows from spiritual health rather than the need to be indispensable.

Christ the King has already met us in our exhaustion and tended the places wounded by fear. He continues meeting us in those who need compassion, including the people closest to us and the person sitting beside us in recovery. When we love without taking over, speak truth without contempt, and remain open to receiving care ourselves, we are not merely helping someone through a difficult season but learning to recognize and serve our King.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where has concern for someone you love begun to cost you peace or pull you toward control?
- What has helped you offer compassion without rescuing or taking responsibility for the outcome?
- How has receiving care in fellowship changed the way you respond to another person's suffering?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17
RESP. PS. Psalm 23:1–2, 2–3, 5–6
SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 28
GOSPEL Matthew 25:31–46

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