When You Serve the Least, You Serve the King Quick Guide (Catholic Edition)

Nov 24, 2026

About this quick guide: this is the short, print-friendly version of the Catholic edition of the guide for the Feast of Christ the King. Anyone is welcome to use it, including members of the Intercessor Church Community Groups. It keeps each question, the Summary, and the Deep Dive, and leaves out the commentary and catechism quotes to save paper.

The full Catholic edition is online: the full guide has the complete quotes from the Church Fathers and saints and the Catechism of the Catholic Church that each Summary and Deep Dive are drawn from. Download it free at angelstudyguides.com.

How to read this guide: each question is labeled by section and number, so A1 is the first question in section A, A2 is the second, and so on. The questions are written for this guide. Each one covers the ground of the outline question and takes it a step further. The linked passage after each question is the one the outline points to, or a verse inside that section's reading, so you can click it and read it in class. Anything after the word "also" is a wider range or an extra passage this guide adds. A CCC number in parentheses, like (CCC 544), points to that paragraph in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The **Summary** and **Deep Dive** are written for this guide from the sources listed at the end. Scripture quoted is from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE).

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This guide follows the Intercessor Church Community Group outline "Ready for the King, Week 4: Feast of Christ the King, When You Serve the Least, You Serve the King."

A. Christ Is the King Who Deserves Our Allegiance

A1. Within three days Jesus would hang on a cross, yet he speaks of coming "in his glory" with "all the angels," sitting "upon his glorious throne," with "all the nations" assembled before him. What do these opening verses claim about who Jesus is, and why does it matter that he says this on the eve of his suffering? (Matthew 25:31-33; also Daniel 7:13-14)

Summary

These verses claim that Jesus is the King and Judge of every person who has ever lived. Two days before he would be handed over to the cross and mocked, he fittingly holds out the glory of his triumph (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea). He came the first time in dishonor and reproach, but then he will sit on the throne of his glory (Chrysostom). His majesty means his divinity, in which he is equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit (Remigius of Auxerre, quoted in the Catena Aurea). By his royal power he will pronounce the sentence of judgment (Rabanus Maurus, quoted in the Catena Aurea). God's reign is an outpouring of life and energy through the universe, with no further resistance (NABRE note). Saying this just before the cross shows the disciples who it really is that is about to suffer, and it steadies them for what is coming. Jesus Christ is Lord and holds all power in heaven and on earth (CCC 668), and as redeemer of the world he has full right to pass final judgment on the works and hearts of all (CCC 679).

Deep Dive

Daniel saw "One like a son of man" who "received dominion, splendor, and kingship" (Daniel 7:13-14). Jesus takes that title for himself: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne" (Matthew 25:31). After the resurrection he says, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). Paul, in one of the outline's readings, writes, "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Psalm 95, also one of the outline's readings, calls the Lord "the great king over all gods" (Psalm 95:3). This passage is the Gospel at Mass on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Pope Pius XI instituted the feast in 1925, first setting it on the last Sunday of October (Quas Primas).

Read before class: Matthew 25:31-33; Daniel 7:13-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

A2. A Savior rescues us; a King rules us. What would it look like for Jesus to be King over your schedule, your money, your words, and your relationships, and why is it possible to welcome him as Savior while quietly keeping parts of life back from his rule? (Matthew 25:31; also Luke 6:46; Philippians 2:9-11)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: letting him set our priorities before the week fills up, giving and spending as people who answer to him, speaking to others the way he would, forgiving when he says to forgive, and obeying when it costs something. Some say they do not want to reign with Christ and that being saved is enough for them, and they are mistaken (Augustine, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The monk gives up his own will and takes up the arms of obedience to fight for Christ the Lord, the true King (Rule of St. Benedict). Anyone with sound judgment will offer his whole self to the labor of such a King (Ignatius of Loyola), and the generous go further and make an offering of themselves to the eternal Lord of all things (Ignatius of Loyola). Christ must reign in our wills, which should obey God's law, and in our hearts, which should love God above all things (Pope Pius XI). Christ, King and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all (CCC 786), and a person is rightly called a king who keeps his own body in obedience (CCC 908, quoting St. Ambrose). We hold parts of life back because being rescued costs us nothing, while being ruled touches everything.

Deep Dive

Jesus asks, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' but not do what I command?" (Luke 6:46). He warns, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). God bestowed on him "the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend" and "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:9-11). The words "Jesus Christ is Lord" were a common early Christian acclamation (NABRE note). Before Pilate, Jesus says, "My kingdom does not belong to this world" (John 18:36). Psalm 95 joins worship and obedience: "Enter, let us bow down in worship," and then, "Oh, that today you would hear his voice: Do not harden your hearts" (Psalm 95:6-8). That psalm opens the Church's daily prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours (NABRE note). The outline's key insight for this section is that Jesus must be Lord over every part of our lives.

Read before class: Matthew 25:31-33; Luke 6:46-49; Philippians 2:5-11; Psalm 95:1-11

A3. The Shepherd-King "will separate them one from another," and in the end there are only two sides. What rivals compete with Jesus for first place in our hearts today, such as comfort, money, approval, politics, or a full calendar, and what are the warning signs that one of them has started making our decisions? (Matthew 25:32-33; also Matthew 6:24)

Summary

This is an application question. Common rivals: money and security, comfort, the approval of others, career, family put ahead of God, politics, entertainment, and a calendar too full to notice anyone. Warning signs include what we think about most, what we will not give up, what makes us anxious or angry when it is threatened, and what regularly wins when it conflicts with obeying Jesus. For now the two groups are mingled together, but then the division will be exact (Chrysostom). The Church on earth is already called his kingdom, though we are still in conflict with the enemy until we reach the kingdom of peace (Augustine, quoted in the Catena Aurea). We are to prefer nothing to the love of Christ (Rule of St. Benedict). A mind made in God's likeness should stay raised above earthly goods, not sunk in them (Francis de Sales). A disciple can serve only one master and must choose between God and wealth (NABRE note). We commit idolatry whenever we honor a creature in place of God (CCC 2113), and nothing is more royal for a soul than to govern the body in obedience to God (CCC 786, quoting St. Leo the Great).

Deep Dive

Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters," and "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Mammon is an Aramaic word meaning wealth or property (NABRE note). In the same chapter he tells his disciples to seek the kingdom first and trust the Father for the rest. In the passage the King separates people "as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). In Ezekiel, the first reading at Mass this Sunday, God says, "I myself will search for my sheep and examine them" (Ezekiel 34:11), and he adds, "I will shepherd them in judgment" (Ezekiel 34:16). Idolatry is not only pagan worship; it includes putting power, pleasure, the state, or money in God's place (CCC 2113). The outline's reflection asks whether Jesus is truly reigning over the heart or other priorities have taken his place.

Read before class: Matthew 25:31-33; Matthew 6:19-24; Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

B. Christ Is the King Who Identifies with the Least

B1. The King names six needs: hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, ill, and in prison. Which of the six stirs you most, and which do you find easiest to overlook? What might your answers show about where God is inviting you to grow? (Matthew 25:35-36; also Isaiah 58:6-7)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: many are moved by hunger or sickness because they have lived it or seen it up close, while prisoners and strangers are the easiest to overlook because they are out of sight or outside our circle. The needs we avoid often show where fear, inconvenience, or prejudice still has a hold on us. The Lord lists six works of mercy here (Remigius of Auxerre, quoted in the Catena Aurea). His requests are easy: not to free the prisoner or heal the sick, only to visit and to come (Chrysostom). The sick are to be cared for before and above all things and served as Christ himself (Rule of St. Benedict), and every guest is to be received as Christ (Rule of St. Benedict). We can go further and become servants of the poor, tending their sickbeds with our own hands (Francis de Sales). The works of mercy are acts of charity by which we help our neighbor in spiritual and bodily needs (CCC 2447), and Christ's compassion for all who suffer goes so far that he identifies himself with them (CCC 1503).

Deep Dive

The King says, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:35-36). Isaiah describes the fast God chooses: "Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; clothing the naked when you see them" (Isaiah 58:7). In Ezekiel God himself does this work: "The lost I will search out, the strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal" (Ezekiel 34:16). The Church's list of the corporal works of mercy comes from this passage and adds burying the dead (CCC 2447). James writes that pure religion is "to care for orphans and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). The Rule of St. Benedict builds two whole chapters, on the sick and on guests, around this Gospel (Rule of St. Benedict).

Read before class: Matthew 25:34-40; Isaiah 58:6-10; James 1:27

B2. The righteous are surprised: "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you?" Why does Jesus count what is done for "one of these least brothers of mine" as done for himself, and what does their surprise tell us about the kind of love he is looking for? (Matthew 25:37-40; also Acts 9:4-5; Matthew 10:40-42)

Summary

Jesus has so joined himself to people in need that he takes what is done for them as done for him. Christ could not urge us more strongly to works of mercy than by saying that whatever is given to the needy and poor is given to himself (Cyprian). In the needy and poor we rightly recognize the person of Jesus Christ our Lord (Leo the Great); while we adore him as King and Lord in the Father's majesty, we can also feed him in his poor (Leo the Great). We are free to understand that it is Christ in every poor person whom we feed or give a drink (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The righteous are not doubting the Lord's words; they are amazed at so great an honor (Rabanus Maurus, quoted in the Catena Aurea), and out of humility they count themselves unworthy of praise (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea). They will be astonished that in caring for those who suffer they were ministering to the Lord himself (NABRE note). Their surprise shows that their love was not a performance for a reward. Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love for them the condition for entering his kingdom (CCC 544). When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus (CCC 2449, quoting St. Rose of Lima).

Deep Dive

The King answers, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). The risen Jesus spoke the same way to Saul, who was attacking Christians: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4). He told the Twelve, "Whoever receives you receives me" (Matthew 10:40), and promised that even "a cup of cold water" given to "one of these little ones" would not lose its reward (Matthew 10:42). Proverbs says, "Whoever cares for the poor lends to the Lord" (Proverbs 19:17). The King tells the righteous, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), and an inheritance is a gift. Paul says we are "created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance" (Ephesians 2:10). Christ is present to his Church in many ways, including in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned, and most especially in the Eucharist (CCC 1373).

Read before class: Matthew 25:34-40; Acts 9:1-5; Matthew 10:40-42; Ephesians 2:8-10

B3. Jesus describes ordinary acts: food, a drink, a welcome, clothing, a visit. Thinking of your neighborhood, workplace, family, and parish, who may be feeling overlooked, lonely, unwelcome, or forgotten, and what is one small, concrete thing you could do for that person this week? (Matthew 25:34-36; also Hebrews 13:1-2)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: a widow or widower eating alone, a new family at Mass, a coworker going through a divorce, a neighbor who is homebound, a teenager on the edge of the group, a relative no one calls, or someone in a hospital, nursing home, or jail. Small steps include a phone call, a meal, a ride, an invitation to sit together, a handwritten note, or a visit. To honor Christ's body we must not neglect him when he is naked (Chrysostom); God has no need of golden vessels but of golden souls (Chrysostom). No one should look down on another person, because the Creator made that same human nature his own (Leo the Great). Christ is received in a special way in the poor and in travelers (Rule of St. Benedict). St. Louis, one of the greatest of kings, served the poor in their own homes and fed them at his own table (Francis de Sales). Charity must not stay shut up in the heart (Therese of Lisieux). The duty to make ourselves a neighbor is even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged (CCC 1932), and the Eucharist commits us to the poor (CCC 1397).

Deep Dive

Hebrews says, "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:1-2). Paul urges believers, "Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality" (Romans 12:13). At the sight of the crowds, Jesus' "heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Paul sets the order of care: "let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith" (Galatians 6:10). St. John Chrysostom preached that the same Lord who said "This is my body" also said that what we fail to do for the least we fail to do for him (Chrysostom). The outline's three practices for the week are to see someone, to serve someone, and to seek Christ daily. Its closing thought adds that Jesus does not ask us to meet every need in the world, only to be faithful with the opportunities he places in front of us.

Read before class: Matthew 25:34-40; Hebrews 13:1-3; Romans 12:9-13

C. Christ Is the King Who Calls Us to Account

C1. Those on the left are not charged with theft, violence, or cruelty. Every charge is something they did not do: "you gave me no food." Why does Jesus treat doing nothing for a person in need so seriously, and how is leaving someone unhelped different from, and yet related to, actively harming them? (Matthew 25:41-43; also James 4:17; James 2:15-17)

Summary

Jesus treats neglect as real sin, because love that does nothing is not love. Those on the left failed in mercy not in one or two ways but in all of them (Chrysostom, quoted in the Catena Aurea). They are people who profess the faith without the works that go with it (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). A mark of those who oppose God's will is that they have no regard for love and no care for the widow, the orphan, the hungry, or the thirsty (Ignatius of Antioch). Those who keep for themselves what would have sustained the dying poor share in their deaths (Gregory the Great). On the last day generosity and meanness will weigh so heavily that they outweigh all other virtues and failings (Leo the Great). Neglect of those who suffer was neglect of the Lord (NABRE note). Harming someone and leaving someone unhelped are different acts, but both treat the person as if he does not matter, and Jesus takes both personally. We will be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones (CCC 1033), and the Last Judgment will reveal the good each person has done or failed to do (CCC 1039).

Deep Dive

The King says to those on his left, "For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink" (Matthew 25:42). James writes, "So for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin" (James 4:17). He gives an example: if someone says to a person without food or clothing, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but gives nothing, "what good is it?" (James 2:16). "So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). The fire is described as "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41), while the kingdom was prepared for people (Matthew 25:34). All three scenes in Matthew 25 turn on something left undone: lamps not supplied with oil, a talent not put to use, and people in need not helped. At every Mass, in the Confiteor, we confess both what we have done and what we have failed to do. Hell is a state of self-exclusion from communion with God, chosen freely (CCC 1033).

Read before class: Matthew 25:41-46; James 2:14-17; James 4:17

C2. They ask, "Lord, when did we see you?" They had seen the need but not the King in it. What makes it easy to notice someone's need and still walk past, such as hurry, fear, awkwardness, or assuming someone else will help, and what would help you stop the next time? (Matthew 25:44-45; also Luke 10:30-37)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: we are in a hurry, we do not know what to say, we fear being taken advantage of or getting pulled into something bigger, we assume a family member, the parish, or an agency will handle it, or we have seen so much need that we have stopped feeling it. If concern for a brother does not move us, the thought of Christ in him should (Cyprian). Greed blinded those on the left (Chrysostom), and it is possible to decorate a church richly while refusing even to look at Christ bound in prison (Chrysostom). The unrighteous excuse their sins and try to make them seem few and small (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Love ought to show itself more in deeds than in words (Ignatius of Loyola). The priest and the Levite, who should have been models of a neighbor, passed the victim by (NABRE note). What helps: praying each morning to notice people, leaving margin in the day, deciding ahead of time to stop, and going with a friend. Christ placed his poor little ones on earth for us (CCC 1039, quoting St. Augustine), and indifference is a sin against God's love (CCC 2094).

Deep Dive

Those on the left ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?" (Matthew 25:44). He answers, "what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:45). In the parable of the Good Samaritan a priest "saw him" and "passed by on the opposite side," and a Levite did the same (Luke 10:31-32). The Samaritan "was moved with compassion at the sight" and "approached the victim" (Luke 10:33-34). Jesus ends with "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). The petition for daily bread in the Our Father cannot be separated from the parable of Lazarus and from this scene of the Last Judgment (CCC 2831). The outline warns that we can be busy with church activities and still miss the people God puts in front of us.

Read before class: Matthew 25:41-46; Luke 10:25-37; Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

C3. The scene ends with two destinations, "eternal punishment" and "eternal life." If living faith shows itself in practical love, what would it look like for this Community Group to be a place where people are truly seen, welcomed, loved, and cared for, and what first step could the group take together? (Matthew 25:46; also 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 6:9-10)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: learning names and stories, noticing who is missing and calling them, making room for newcomers, bringing meals when someone is sick or grieving, praying for specific needs and following up, and serving together outside the group. First steps could include choosing one person or family to help this month, visiting a homebound parishioner together, or each naming one act of service and reporting back next week. If we are not yet able to die for a brother, we can begin by giving him what we have (Augustine). Feeding the needy is the purchase price of the heavenly kingdom (Leo the Great). A merciful God records the good deeds of the good before the bad deeds of the bad (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Those who call themselves Christians will be recognized by their conduct (Ignatius of Antioch). We can admit, as one saint did, that we do not yet love others as our Lord loves them (Therese of Lisieux). Relieving the poor is one of the tools of good works (Rule of St. Benedict). At the evening of life we shall be judged on our love (CCC 1022, quoting St. John of the Cross), and Christ will recognize his chosen ones by what they have done for the poor (CCC 2443).

Deep Dive

The passage ends, "And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). John writes, "The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us," and asks how the love of God can remain in someone who "sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion" (1 John 3:16-17). "Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). Paul encourages, "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). Jesus said, "This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). For the Christian, to reign is to serve Christ, especially in the poor and the suffering (CCC 786). The outline's group commitment asks each person to name one specific act of service for the coming week.

Read before class: Matthew 25:41-46; 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 6:9-10

Bringing It All Together

This closing page gathers the whole study into a few lines you can carry out of the room. Read it aloud at the end of class, or come back to it during the week.

The big picture

On the last Sunday of the Church's year, the Solemnity of Christ the King, Jesus shows how the story ends: the Son of Man on his throne, every nation gathered before him, and a shepherd separating sheep from goats (Matthew 25:31-33). What surprises both groups is where the King has been all along. He was with the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner, and he takes what was done for them, or left undone, as done or left undone to himself (Matthew 25:40, 45).

Key takeaways

1. **Jesus is King, not only Savior.** The one who was about to be crucified is the Judge of all nations, and he claims every part of life: our time, our money, our words, and our relationships (A1, A2).
2. **There is no neutral ground.** In the end there are only two sides. Anything that takes first place over him, even a good thing, has become a rival king (A3).
3. **The King is met in the least.** He counts kindness to the hungry, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner as kindness to himself: "you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). The Church calls these acts the works of mercy (B1, B2).
4. **The love he looks for is ordinary and unselfconscious.** A meal, a drink, a welcome, clothing, a visit. The righteous were not keeping score and were surprised to learn he had noticed (B2, B3).
5. **Doing nothing is not innocent.** Those on the left are not charged with cruelty. They saw the need and walked past, and the King says, "you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:45). This is why we confess at Mass what we have failed to do (C1, C2).
6. **Mercy is not a wage. It is grace at work in us.** The kingdom is an inheritance, "prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34), and at the evening of life we will be judged on our love, shown "in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18) (C3).

One sentence to remember

When you serve the least, you serve the King.

A verse to keep

"And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25:40)

This week

Choose one person, one need, and one concrete act, and do it before the group meets again. At the end of each day, ask: Lord, where did I see you today, and where did I walk past you?

Sources

The Summary and Deep Dive draw on these sources. The full Catholic edition at angelstudyguides.com quotes them word for word under each question.

Source	Where to find it
Catechism of the Catholic Church, cited by paragraph number (CCC); some paragraphs quote St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Leo the Great, St. John of the Cross, and St. Rose of Lima	vatican.va
St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25 (quotes St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, Origen, Rabanus Maurus, and Remigius of Auxerre)	CCEL
St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letters to the Smyrnaeans and the Ephesians	Smyrnaeans, Ephesians
St. Cyprian of Carthage, On Works and Alms	New Advent
St. John Chrysostom, Homily 79 and Homily 50 on Matthew	Homily 79, Homily 50
St. Augustine, Homily 5 on the First Epistle of John	New Advent
St. Leo the Great, Sermons 9 and 10, On the Collections	Sermon 9, Sermon 10
Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue and Chapters 4, 36, and 53	CCEL
St. Gregory the Great, Pastoral Rule, Book III	New Advent

Source	Where to find it
St. Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises: The Call of the Temporal King and the Contemplation to Gain Love	CCEL
St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapters 14 and 15	CCEL
St. Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Chapter 9	CCEL
Pope Pius XI, Quas Primas (1925), the encyclical that instituted the feast of Christ the King	vatican.va
New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), text and footnotes	Bible Gateway, USCCB
USCCB Mass readings, Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, November 22, 2026	USCCB