

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

Christ the King

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28 Matthew 25:31-46

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We have all heard the phrase, “God loves us” thousands of times, but do we really believe it? I mean, do we really think of Jesus as the son of a truly loving God? Or, do we think of God as some sort of harsh judge, who sits up there just waiting for us to break one of his many rules? And, if we do think of God as someone who loves us, do we not often assume that his love comes with strings attached? You know, we think that God will only love us if we keep every one of his rules, to show ourselves worthy of his love. As a matter of fact, there are many religions out there that teach this very thing. Thank God, Catholicism is not one of them! No, our precious faith teaches us, that God loves us unconditionally and will love us eternally, just as we are. **For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die for us upon the cross.**

Today is the last Sunday in our liturgical year, and today we come to celebrate and confess Christ as our king. **Equally emphasized is the fact that his is a kingship different from that of any other.** Our readings this morning invite us to reflect on exactly what kind of king Jesus Christ is and what it **means** for us to truly say that we belong to his Kingdom. As we celebrate the kingship of Christ today, Jesus invites us as he did 2000 years ago: **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart”** (*Matthew 11:29*). Today is the day to ask ourselves how far we have responded, as individuals and as a community, to this invitation, to cultivate the mind of Christ in our daily dealings with one another, especially in our dealings with those we perceive to be different from us. This is the way to show in our daily lives that Jesus Christ is indeed our king: by cultivating and living out in our lives the gentle and humble mind of Christ our King.

We are judged on our capacity for Love. Today’s Gospel confronts us with the fact that if we haven’t shared his love with others, we cannot be exposed to the fullness of Christ’s love in heaven. It is interesting that not only the goats, the people who don’t help others, but even the sheep, those who do help others, say that they don’t remember seeing the Lord. That’s understandable. Christ is present in every aspect of our lives. It’s just that we might not recognize him or **choose** not to recognize him. But, He is still there. Yes, he is present in the Church, in the Scripture and in the Eucharist. But he is also present in the poor and the poorest of the poor, as Saint Mother Theresa of Calcutta would refer to the suffering homeless. He is present in the children dying of hunger and malnutrition in Ethiopia

and the Sudan. He is present in those left homeless by recent natural disasters such as the hurricanes in Louisiana or the fires in California. He is present in that doctor or nurse, the frontline first responder who is risking his or her life to provide care and comfort to those affected with this ugly Corona virus. He is present in the grandparent isolated and quarantined in a nursing home because of COVID-19.

Yes, he is present in our family as we pray together at home before meals or at bedtime. But he is also present in your wife or your husband when he or she has had a bad day and needs your support. He is present in our children when their needs drain us. We put a lot of energy and love into our children, and we are often too overwhelmed and tired to think about it, but that infant you get up at 3 am to nurse is Christ. The toddler getting into everything and making a mess quicker than you can clean up after him or her is Christ. The child struggling with physics or chemistry in school is Christ. The teenager needing both, **wings** and **protection** is Christ, and that young adult you are putting through college is Christ.

He is present in those people we meet who are prayerful, spiritual, charismatic. But he is also present in those who may not even recognize his presence in their lives. So also is he present in those mocked and shunned by our society. When we greet someone, who is a bit eccentric and who everyone else treats poorly, we are greeting Christ. When we give help to a family struggling to make ends meet, we are helping Christ. When we go to Honduras or Jamaica or Brazil to help the poor, it is Christ that we are helping.

Perhaps, the foremost authority on today's gospel was Saint Mother Theresa. Her comment on the gospel was that at the end of our lives we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made or how many great things we have accomplished. We will be judged simply by, **"I was hungry, and you gave me to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in."** Mother Theresa goes on to say, **"Hungry, not only for bread, but hungry for love; naked not only for clothing, but for human dignity and respect; homeless not only for want of a room of bricks, but homeless because of rejection."** This is Christ in disguise. Our Gospel also calls us to justice. We don't like to think about the people dying from starvation around the world while we pay our athletes millions of dollars to play games. But the Gospel demands that we consider the justice of our actions and yes, also our **inactions**.

In many ways today's gospel **is** a disturbing Gospel. We are troubled by a Gospel that tells us that we are accountable **not** just for the things we do that are wrong, but **also** for the things we fail to do. To profess ourselves as Christians demands that we make a clear and conscious decision to integrate Christ into every thread and fiber of the fabric of our lives. There can **never** be a time or a situation that we refuse to recognize his presence in others.

This is the Solemnity of Christ the King. At the conclusion of the Church year we are asked what the Christ event means in our lives. We are asked about our world view. Do we view others as those loved by Christ, as those who Christ is present in, or are we so tied up in ourselves that we rarely integrate our living of the Christian life with our profession of Christianity. We conclude the Church year by asking the Lord to help us serve the King of Kings as he presents himself in those reaching out to us.

Yes, we are standing together on the threshold of a liturgical year now ending and another soon to begin, poised with one foot in the past and the other about to step into the future. When endings mesh with beginnings, it seems only natural to look over our shoulders at what has transpired in our lives, in our families, in our world and in our church. Especially during this year of 2020. As we take a truthful inventory and determine the measure of who we were, and who we hope to become, it also seems appropriate that we gather up all that we are and offer it back to our Heavenly King as the liturgy of our lives.

And in a few moments as we continue with our liturgy and come forward to this Eucharistic table, let us pause for a moment and ask our heavenly Father for the courage to accept Jesus the Christ as our true King and the wisdom to see him in everyone that we will encounter. As always, let us ask him to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

God is gracious and merciful; his love compels us to treat others with mercy and kindness. When we do something for one of Christ's little ones, we **do it** for Christ. Do you treat your neighbor with mercy and love as Christ has treated you? Let us call to mind the words of our Lord, **"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you cared for me, in prison and you came to see me."** We began our celebration this morning by confessing our sins

and we uttered those words, “Forgive us our sins, in what we have done and in what we have failed to do.” My Brothers and sisters, whatever we failed to do to our brothers and sisters, that is exactly what we failed to do for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ whose Kingship we confess and celebrate today.

This is the message of today's feast. This is the message of today's gospel. It's a call from Christ the King to join him in the great task of bringing to completion God's kingdom in today's world. It's a call to change the world. It's a call to take, at least, the first step by changing our own personal lives, at home and at work, so that they reflect more perfectly Christ's teaching in the Gospel. It's a call to step out of the darkness and to say yes to Christ, “yes” to the King of the Universe.

The Lord is on watch. He is always near. The Lord is my Shepherd. I walk with no fear. May God bless each and every one of you!! And have you have a Blessed, Safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

