

Christ the king Feast

After worship the pastor was shaking hands with parishioners, when one woman turned bright red and looked at her shoes as she shook his hand. "I hope you didn't take it personally, Pastor", she said, 'when my husband walked out during your sermon.' 'I did wonder,' the pastor replied. "I hope and pray he's not ill."

"Oh, no!" said the woman. "And it's not a reflection on you, Pastor. I can assure you of that. My husband's been walking in his sleep ever since he was a child."

Dear Friends,

We celebrate the end of the liturgical year this Sunday and as a summit we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ, the king of the universe.

The historical reason for the establishment of this Feast gives us a better understanding of what this feast means for us today. World War I was one of the main reasons for establishing the Feast of Christ the King. Within a few weeks after the start of World War I, (July 28, 1914), Pope St Pius X passed away (August 20, 1914). His successor Pope Benedict XV, who assumed the leadership of the Church on 3 September 1914, bore the full brunt of this war. He called this war "senseless massacre" and "the suicide of the civilized Europe". Pope Pius XI who became his successor in 1922, realized that the main reason for the First World War was the insatiable thirst for power. Hence, in 1925, he proposed an alternate model of kingship in Christ. He created the Feast of Christ the Universal King!

I have heard stories and witnessed the king's life in my country, especially when my state was ruled by three kingdoms. There were a lot of good things that happened to the state by some of the kings, still it is a monarchy. Our Diocesan Patron Saint, St. John De Britto, a Portuguese Missionary was murdered by the king for converting his prince to Christianity, because he had four wives and one of them was the niece of the king.

Though today, we don't have monarchy around the world, still the leaders are thirsting for power. We can see all the leaders of our world are trying to bring back a kind of monarchy in some way. At least I can share what I see in Israel and India.

The readings today tell us how Jesus Christ, as a king, is totally different from others. The first reading from the book of prophet Ezekiel talks about shepherding the people. Shepherd means knowing, living, and leading. The shepherd knows the sheep and binds up the injured. It shows his mercy and compassion to the sheep and at the same time would judge or guide them in a right way.

The second reading talks that through his death and resurrection, he brought us from slavery of death and sin. As a king, he conquered death and Satan.

The Gospel talks about how we become a part of the kingdom. The shepherd appreciates the deeds of mercy. He said that those deeds were done to him. He identifies himself with needy people. We may wonder about what the difference

between sheep and goats is. They basically are from the same breed. There are some differences in appearance and body composition. In the scripture sheep are quoted for those who accepted salvation and goats are those who rejected salvation.

Jesus doesn't ask us to do deeds of Mercy to earn God's favor, rather he emphasizes our responsibility towards our neighbors and people in need. Some other person says that it is our duty to take care of those who don't.

Every year, during the final weeks of the Liturgical year, we are reminded of the final moments of our life on earth. Last week we were told to keep our accounts ready to submit to the king. Today we are told what type of account we need to get ready. This is an account of how we have put to use our talents, abilities, and opportunities, not for our own self-promotion but for the betterment of our neighbor's life. Especially the neighbors who are in dire needs – like food, shelter, and clothing, as well as those who are deprived of their freedom (prisoners), health (the sick) and their identity (strangers)!

For personal reflection.

A prisoner was getting instructions since he was willing to receive Baptism. The Priest who was guiding him, approached him on a Saturday and said, "Tomorrow is Sunday. If you wish, I can request the warden to let you go with me to the church for Sunday Mass." The prisoner looked at the Priest. He then showed the scars on his hands and face and said, "The warden will have no problem in granting me permission to leave the prison; but will the people in the church give me permission to enter the church?" The Priest stood shocked not knowing what to tell him.