

## **Homily Feast of Christ the King Matthew 25: 31-46**

- This Sunday has a special name, we call it the “Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe”
- And it is a day celebrated pretty much throughout the Christian world. Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and Anglicans all celebrate what we more commonly call the “Feast of Christ the King”.
- And there are some interesting traditions that go along with this feast. Our Anglican brothers and sisters have a nickname for today; they call it “Stir up Sunday”- for two reasons. In their opening prayer they ask God to “stir up” the faith of the people. The second reason (nothing to do with religion) is they have this recipe for Christmas pudding which calls for the pudding to sit for several weeks before baking on Christmas Eve. Today is the day the cook is to “stir” the pudding – strange but true!
- Christians in Sweden call this day the “Sunday of Doom” because they focus on the end of time and the need to be prepared.
- In Poland people gather around the largest statue of Jesus in the entire world – The Statue of Christ the King – it stands 33 meters high (about 110 feet), one meter for each year Christ lived on earth.
- The feast of Christ the King originated in 1925 for an important reason.
- World War I had just ended, communism was on the rise, and people were really struggling in poverty and looking for leaders and political parties to rescue them. People were being told to trust government and keep religion private if at all.
- Leaders like Stalin in Russia and Mussolini in Italy were growing in followers, influence and power. These leaders among others had three very dangerous characteristics:

- They used hate and fear to send a message that only certain types of people mattered, only certain types were important and had value.
- They were oppressive leaders who wanted to limit people's freedom in order to control them.
- They were violent leaders who placed little value on a person's life. They didn't think twice about using torture and murder to rule their nation.
- So in 1925 in response to all of this, Pope Pius XI called for an annual Sunday feast where Christians all over the world recognize both privately and publicly that Jesus rules as King both in our individual lives (hearts, minds and souls) and He rules over all creation.
- He called this day the "Feast of Christ the King" and challenged all Christians to mark this date on our calendar as a reminder: to remember the kingdom we belong to; to remember who our King really is and what type of King He is like...and to remember what is expected of us as members of that kingdom.
- As we face the problems and challenges and craziness in our own world today, it is as important as ever that we spend some time remembering these things. Let's spend a minute doing just that.
- We may be citizens of a particular country but above all we belong to God's kingdom. A kingdom where everyone matters. No matter our age, our gender, the color of our skin, the language that we speak – God loves us all fiercely. We are all equal, precious and important in God's eyes. No one is too small or unimportant. We are all welcomed in this kingdom.
- It is a kingdom where we are given the gift of freedom. We are free to make choices. Choices that allow us to become who we really are, who we were created to be: Children of God with His love and goodness inside us. We are free to grow to our full potential.

- It is a kingdom that transcends time. Where one day we will be with God forever in a place more beautiful than we could ever imagine. That is the kingdom we belong to!!
- And our king is Jesus Christ. We just spent our whole Church year listening to scripture readings and sermons about this king. From them we learned:
- Our king is loving, always close by and wants to be personally involved in our lives.
- When you have a moment re-read today's first reading (Ezekiel 34:11-17) and every time you see the word "sheep" replace it with the word "you" - with yourself. Listen to how it sounds: "thus says the Lord, I myself will look after **you**...I will rescue **you** when it is cloudy and dark....I myself will pasture (feed) **you**... I myself will give **you** rest...When **you** are lost I will seek **you** out...When **you** are sick, I will heal **you**."
- That's the type of king we have. How blessed we are!!
- Our king is a teacher He showed us how to pray and told us we can talk to God as "our Father".
- He taught us how to think and act and relate to each other. He taught us loving those that love us is not going far enough – we must learn to love everyone, even our enemies.
- Our king is a healer. He shows us God's Divine power is right here within our reach. We saw Jesus heal the sick; open the eyes of the blind, cast out demons, even raise the dead.
- This past year we learned a lot about the type of king Jesus is:
- Divine, The Son of God, yet a king who cried at the tomb of His friend Lazarus.
- A king that sets the law: "The last shall be first" with a special love for the poor and needy.

- A king willing to give everything, even His life, for His people. That is the type of king we have.
- So we are left with the question “What does it mean for us to follow this king and live as members of His kingdom?”
- That answer is put very simply and clearly in today’s Gospel reading.
- Jesus calls us to see Him in each other. To realize each person is a sacred place where the Holy Spirit dwells.
- He calls us to be patient, understanding, and forgiving-like He is.
- He calls us to take the talents God gave us and use them for the good of others.
- Most importantly, Jesus calls us to see Him in the poor, the sick, those suffering. He expects us to be His eyes, His ears, His hands, His heart... and bring His love to those in need.
- He is not calling us to solve all the world’s problems. He calls us to look in those small, simple places – in the people right in front of us each day - for opportunities to be His love and build the kingdom.
- He calls us to simple acts of love, one person at a time: a glass of water, something to eat, donating clothing, a phone call to someone sick or lonely or afraid. Kindness to someone new at work or at school or in the neighborhood.
- Things all of us can do, things we are expected to do as members of God’s kingdom.
- Saint Therese wrote: “Grow where you are planted”. That’s what, we, as members of God’s kingdom are expected to do.
- So as we celebrate this Feast of Christ the King, let’s give thanks for such a wonderful king and for what a wonderful kingdom to which we are invited to live. And let’s ask God to help us recognize the chances that come

our way – everyday – to serve Jesus our king by serving others.