

## **Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe – 11/26/17**

**Brothers and sisters: What does the celebration of Christ the King mean? It means everything. It means that we will share in the glory of God if we respond to God's call to share in His Redemptive Mission. Today's celebration concludes the Church year by reflecting on the fundamental truths of Christianity. Those truths are that Jesus Christ came to restore spiritual life to mankind and form mankind into a Kingdom for God the Father. This is made explicit in today's second reading, from the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians. The resurrection of Jesus has restored the life that was lost by mankind. All who belong to Christ will be handed over to God the Father at the end of time.**

**Several images are offered to us by the readings today. The First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm are rich in this image of THE SHEPHERD: a caring and loving shepherd. But the Prophet Ezekiel in the first reading also mentions that this shepherd will judge his sheep. The gospel talks about Jesus (Son of Man) as Judge of all nations.**

**To prepare us for the end time, the Church turns to the prophet Ezekiel, who is speaking of the return of God's chosen people to their former realm of Israel and the fearsome judgment that will accompany this homecoming. The same prophetic words can be applied to the Christian people, for before entering into God's Kingdom we too will be subject to a judgment which is perfectly just and which allows for no appeal. The last portion of today's gospel clearly says that.**

**The Second Reading from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians explains that God's power to act as a True King and Just Judge is manifested through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Briefly, Paul tells us that Christ's resurrection means two things for us:**

**(1)first, the fact that He was raised means that we too - whose nature He assumed - will be raised.**

**(2)second, Paul teaches us that Christ's resurrection is definitive proof of His victory over sin and death: "then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to His God and Father, when He has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**

**Now, let us go to the gospel: If we do not have God in our lives, we will easily overlook His Presence reaching out to us in the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked and all those Jesus mentions in the Gospel reading. If we do not have**

God in our lives, we are part of the problem of the world. But God wants us to a part of the solution.

The Presence of God protects us from going through the motions of life. The Presence of God gives us the ability to live each moment as an opportunity to grow closer to Him. The Presence of God within each of us leads us to be the solution to the world's needs. Last Thursday was Thanksgiving Day. The holidays are upon us. Without God, Thanksgiving was just a day for a big meal. Without God, Christmas will be nothing more than a celebration of materialism. Decorations will be taken out of their storage boxes and the proper sentiments will be mustered up, but without God, Christmas will merely be a day of empty sentiments. But with God in our lives, Christmas becomes an opportunity for us to draw into a deeper union with the Presence that gives value to all life.

The question that is put before us in the teaching on the sheep and the goats is: *how have you shown your love to your neighbors?* Both sheep and goats were surprised to learn that the Son of Man appearing to them in His Glory, with majestic, bright lights, with angels all over the place, and with trumpets booming out like thunder, this same Son of Man, the Judge of the Living and the Dead, was present to them in the suffering of the world. The sheep did not need to be told what to do. They cared for others. They did what the deep presence of the Lord within them led them to do: they reached out to those who needed them. They cared for Christ. The goats could not be concerned with anyone but themselves. They ignored the plight of others and missed the Presence of God.

If we are serious about our Christianity, if we are committed to the Kingdom of God, then we will be living lives of sacrificial love, the love of Jesus Christ. Out of love for Christ, we will have no choice but to reach out to the suffering people of the world. In this way, we will recognize the Presence of God in those who might not even recognize His Presence in themselves. Let us not be wrapped up in indifference. If our lives are about "taking care of ourselves," then we will miss our opportunity to serve God in others. What is the center of my life?

To illustrate this question, it would be beneficial for us to recall the life of the Polish astronomer: Niclas Kopernik, better known as Copernicus. In Krakow where Copernicus studied, his studies led him to discover the true relationship of the earth to the sun. Contrary to appearances, the sun does not revolve around the earth. The earth revolves around the sun.

Copernicus knew the correct relationship of the earth to the sun. He also knew something much more important: the correct relationship of man to God. Copernicus was a devout Christian. As a young man he came to Rome in order to participate in the Holy Year of 1500. There is evidence that he prayed the Church's Office Prayer which is the Liturgy of Hours, every day of his adult life. On his

deathbed his admirers brought him the astronomy books he had written, asking him to point out the most significant passages. He brushed them aside and instead asked a friend to write this epitaph:

*O Lord, I cannot ask for the faith that you gave to Paul;  
the mercy that you showed to Peter I dare not ask.  
But the grace that you showed to the dying robber, that, Lord, show to me.*

My dear people of God: what does this epitaph tell us? For sure, Copernicus knew the correct relation of planet earth to the sun. He also understood man's proper relationship to the Lord. Before Him we are fallen creatures in need of grace. In today's second reading, St. Paul tells us that Christ is the exact center of the universe and that human history revolves around His death on the cross. Just as Copernicus saw that the earth is not the center, he knew that man is not the center.

This is most fitting because on that Judgment Day, all of us are going to be desperately seeking God's mercy. And Jesus is telling us that the amount of mercy we will be granted is going to be in direct proportion to the amount of mercy we have shown others. The words Jesus uses are quite explicit, *'For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.'*

That kind of mercy requires a revolution. It's like the Copernican revolution. Just as Copernicus recognized the earth is not the center, we must recognize that we are not the center. Jesus is. Copernicus knew that as surely as he knew about the earth and the sun. You and I need to acknowledge Jesus is the center, the king. Today as we conclude our liturgical year, we join Copernicus in recognizing the true center, not only of the solar system, but of human history and of the universe is **JESUS Christ, our King**. Amen