

## **Solemnity of Christ the King: Wearing the Colors of Our King**

This Sunday we conclude the Church year with the celebration of Christ the King. We begin the Church year with Advent, as we long for the coming of the Kingdom, and the coming of the Messiah. We celebrate the Nativity of the Lord with grand festivity during the Christmas season and then consider the first days of His Ministry on earth in the first Sundays of Ordinary Time. When Lent begins we reflect on His sacrificial love and our response to the call to live in His Way. We celebrate the triumph of His Life over death during the Paschal Triduum and the entire Easter Season. The celebration of the Presence of His Spirit among us, the birth of our union as People of God, the Body of Christ, begins at Pentecost and continues throughout the remainder of the Church year. We conclude the year today with a feast that is itself a summary of all that has gone before: Jesus Christ is our Lord and King.

On the Feast of Christ the King many years ago I began wearing clerical attire. Often the children and young people will ask, "Why do priests dress like they do?" When I am in one of my strange moods, I say, "School colors," Actually the black is to remind us as well as others of the death of the Lord. Jesus triumphed over death. We are called to triumph over the death of sin in our world and in our own lives. The white collar is a sign of service. Serfs and slaves wore collars as a sign that they owed their service to someone else. Clerics wear collars as a sign that we owe our service to Jesus Christ and His People.

In today's second reading from the fifteenth chapter of the *First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, we heard Paul refer to Jesus as the New Adam. The first Adam chose pride and selfishness, pushed his Creator and Life Giver aside, and invited death into the world. Pain, suffering and death were never God's plan for mankind. However, mankind would be given the ability to choose God. Mankind, Adam, chose himself instead, and by clinging to his own life, chose death. Jesus is the New Adam. He chose the Plan of the Life Giver and sacrificed Himself, even willing to suffer death so that Life could be restored to God's people. His complete embrace of the Love of the Father, returned Life to the world. Throughout the Church year we celebrate the triumph of Jesus Christ.

We are called to experience life in its fullest and truest state. We are called to grow more and more alive every day. We do this by rekindling the love of Christ in the world. We experience His presence reaching out to the hungry, the sick, the persecuted, and all those people mentioned in our Gospel reading. This is the work of the Kingdom of God. We are called to be alive to Jesus Christ reaching out to us throughout the world. We are called to join Christ in the transformation of the world from the death of selfishness to the life of sacrificial love. It is through our union with the sacrificial love of Jesus for the least of his people that we embrace the Life of the Lord.

The order of the universe needs to be restored to God's original Plan. That is the reason why the Second Person of the Trinity became one of us. God had

compassion on his people's suffering the result of their own selfishness. He sent His son to teach us a new way of living. He taught us new values, the value of sacrifice. He taught us to seek a new treasure, the Kingdom of God.

When Christ ascended to the Father He charged his disciples with a tremendous task, an enormous task. The Lord demanded that His followers continue the transformation of the world that He had begun.

On one of his many journeys, Pope St. John Paul II had a bit of a confrontation with a reporter. Perhaps you have heard about the incident. It took place on the airplane. The story goes that the Holy Father came out of his private quarters to talk to the other people on the plane. A reporter, in complete violation of standard protocol, asked the Holy Father whether he was ready to compromise regarding strict adherence to morality, especially in the light of so many people who disagreed with the Church on one issue or another. The Pope was extremely upset by the question. He told the reporter, "You have no concept of what our mission is here." With that he stormed back into his quarters.

"You have no concept what our mission is here." The Pope was not talking about the particular country he was visiting. He was talking about the charge that Christ gave his followers which he, as the leader of the Church, was promoting. He was united with Christ in the transformation of the world. His concern was not in finding a pleasing platform to insure his election as the most popular pope of the century. He was concerned with allowing Christ to work through him. All that mattered was the Kingdom of God.

The transformation of the world from the death of selfishness to the life of sacrificial love is the work of the Kingdom of God. This is the work that we are bound to do as members of this Kingdom.

Throughout the Church year we celebrate the life and teaching of our Lord. Now, at the end of the Church year, we are told: "This is not a history lesson. This is a way of life that is still new to the world. This is the work that we must do. We must join Christ in continuing the transformation of the world into his Kingdom."

He is our King. We are called to wear his colors. These colors are compassion, selflessness, and sacrificial love.