

***Christ the King Sunday 11-25-07 Year C
Deacon Bob Corsaro

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I hope that all of you enjoyed thanksgiving and had a wonderful feast. Today we celebrate another feast, a special feast, The feast of Christ the King. The thanksgiving feast I am quite sure filled all of our bellies...mmmm cherry piepumpkin pie....apple pie.... If I see any of you nodding off during my homily, I trust it will be to the mass amount of triptophane consumed with the turkey dinner and turkey leftovers.

It is my prayer for all of you here that today you are filled, your Spirits and hearts filled with the love and grace of Christ our savior, our king!

I was met with a challenge while preparing for today's homily. One of the homiletic resources I reflect on is written by a Franciscan priest who happens to be very active in ministry to the incarcerated on death row.

Pretty heavy stuff huh?

He encourages his readers to look at a list he publishes with the names and addresses of death row prisoners, possibly send them a postcard over the holidays, and maybe even become a penpal with one.

Initially, I thought this would be a pretty good idea, then I paused and asked myself, do I really want to get involved with someone on death row, a murderer..how could I believe anything this person tells me?

Then it hit me. Jesus himself was on death row, as were the other two men in today's gospel.

Jesus was innocent of all charges brought against him, yet he was accused, found guilty and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

His head was covered with a makeshift crown of thorns. He was mocked, ridiculed and tortured by the Jewish leaders, the Roman leaders and soldiers.

A board, was Nailed above his head with the inscription “**King of the Jews**”.

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As he was suspended by nails upon the cross the crowds watched passively while the leaders and soldiers yelled, **if he saved others, and if he is the messiah, the chosen one, let him save himself !**

All of this, he humbly accepted. (Pause)

Now, Lets take a moment and point our attention to the penitent thief. What did this man see that the leaders and soldiers did not see?

What was it that caught this criminals attention?

Did he make eye contact with Jesus?

How did Jesus touch his heart?

It seems this man experienced a conversion of heart while he hung there next to Jesus.

Where did this newfound faith come from?

This man openly confesses his guilt, and accepts his punishment as just, Then turns to Jesus and professes his faith, **Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.**

Now some unbelievers would scoff at his actions and comment that this guy knew he was going to die and he figured, what the heck, this is the only thing I can do right now that could possibly save my neck, if Jesus really is the Messiah.

But the truth is, Jesus certainly had the ability to recognize sincerity.

So what did Jesus do... he welcomed this man into his home.

Today you will be with me in paradise!

This is a bit like the prodigal son story isn't it?

The truth is, Jesus could have very easily pulled himself off the cross, but what would this have accomplished? Jesus, The king of the Jews had already given many signs of miracles and hope that had been witnessed by many and discarded.

Jesus had bigger plans here. Plans to show us his love for us all. His forgiving heart for us all. His promise to us.... ... the promise of resurrection and eternal life would be realized through this event. The Grace of Christ the King becomes available to all who wish to receive it.

In the Christological hymn found in Philipians Chapter 2, Paul writes,

“ Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who though he was in the form of God Did not regard equality with God something to be grasped, rather he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he HUMBLED himself, becoming obedient to death...even death on a cross.

This common thief, humbled himself before Jesus, received a glimpse of the divine, a glimpse into the kingdom. He recognized the kingdom of God here on earth and would soon be with Jesus in the Fullness of the eternal kingdom in paradise.

When have you or I received a glimpse of the divine?
When has Christ the King shown his kingdom or himself to you?

If we quiet ourselves for a moment or two each day and reflect on what is happening around us, we may receive a glimpse of the kingdom here on earth.

These moments exist right here within our parish and daily lives.

Something as simple as eye contact while giving and receiving the sacrament of the Eucharist, supporting a family who lost a loved one, walking with someone suffering through a crisis who has no one to turn to, preparing a place for the homeless to rest, eat and sleep.

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Rejoicing in the miracle of birth, the sacrament of baptism, the joy of a bride and groom recently blessed by the love of God.

Special moments spent with an aging parent as we offer back to them the love and care they so tenderly provided for us.

Pay close attention to the love within these special moments..open our hearts to the movement of the Spirit, What we sense, what we feel.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us, when you fed the poor, welcomed the stranger, visited the imprisoned, you fed, welcomed and visited me.

Mother Teresa's ministry in India, caring for societies castaways who lie dying in the gutters is a fine example of the kingdom of God here on earth. There are many stories written about young Nuns seeing the eyes of Christ in the faces of the dying.

The kingdom Christ the King brought upon us is a kingdom not identified with jewels, opulence, or palaces...a kingdom not guided by Dictatorship or military force, **But by love**...love that nourishes forgiveness and equality... love that lifts up and brings hope to the least of our brothers and sisters. This is where we connect with Jesus Christ.

So as we finish up the liturgical year this week, let us look forward to the Advent Season, a season of hope, preparing for the birth of Christ, allowing ourselves to walk with him within his kingdom here on earth.

