

Homily for the Feast of Christ the King

A Feast at odds with an image; an image at odds with a culture. I can't think of a better way to describe what we are presented today on this Feast of Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe. A title of royalty doesn't seem to blend well with a man nailed to a cross, writhing in pain as the moment of his death quickly approaches. And even more startling is the action of this man in suffering who turns to another also in pain in order to console him with the words "This day, you will be with Me in paradise."

Yet it is precisely in all of this that we find not only the meaning of this Feast but also an instruction about the gift of faith within our own lives. There is not much regal about a man crucified as a common criminal. But maybe a regal lifestyle and a stylish crown isn't what Christ the King is all about. This isn't what the Church is all about. The message for today is that Christ is king not in his power but in His willingness to lay down His life as an act of love for each one of us, for all God's people.

And in the act of dying Christ teaches us that to live our faith is to sacrifice ourselves in order to bring to others the gift of compassion and

understanding, of forgiveness and peace. This Feast calls us to bring to each other what Christ brought to the crucified thief...consolation, compassion, forgiveness and a spirit of hope that lifts us far above what we might individually be going through. Hardly what our culture would teach us to do but then again our culture offers us little beyond self-absorption and concern for our own needs.

We end the Church year by celebrating Christ the King. What we celebrate, for all our ceremony and ritual, for all our riches and abundance, is that to follow Christ who is our King is to follow God's love in the perfect sacrifice of the gift of Christ Jesus. We learn once more that the only thing that is truly important is the love we bring to each other in gratitude for the love that God first brought to us.