

8.21.22: 21C

In many of the world's great religions they each have their own way of acknowledging God as their Lord or master. When Muslims pray they place their foreheads on the ground because their dignity is found in submission to God. (In prostration, they are nearest to God.) In Judaism they place the Yarmulke cap on the very highest point of their being—on their head, the vessel of our intellect—to tell themselves and the world that there is something which is above man's intellect—the infinite wisdom of God. In the Eastern Orthodox Church a person makes the sign of the cross and then they bow from the waist and touch the floor with their fingers. This expresses their reverence and subservience to God. Roman Catholics genuflect for much the same reason. Facing the tabernacle where the blessed sacrament is reserved inside a sacred vessel called the ciborium, we bend our right knee to the floor showing that we are the obedient servant to the master, just like a Roman soldier makes himself available under the service of his Lord commander. All of our gestures and postures in mass are important.

Our actions say out loud what we believe and who we serve. We want our master to know who we are. We want God to be able to recognize us, as His beloved creation, especially at the hour of our life. Of all the estimated 36K souls that die each day that go and meet the Master face to face for the first time, we want Him to know who we are. We don't ever want to hear Him say to us, I never knew you. He certainly recognized St. Lawrence, a deacon, who was arrested by the pagan prefect of Milan and told to gather up all the treasures of the church and bring it to him. So he spent the next three days distributing all the church's wealth to the poor and widows and then gathered those folks up and told the prefect, these sick and poor souls are the greatest treasure of the church. The prefect was not amused so he made a large cooking grill and a bed of hot coals for Lawrence to expire slowly and painfully. St. Lawrence is another example they show us how God can give us strength in adversity. Ironically St. Lawrence is the patron saint of chefs. When Judas left the 12 for being unfaithful and unrepentant, Jesus didn't try to stop him. He was replaced with Matthias. If there is someone that is not on board with the mission it may be time to do some pruning. God will provide the next steps. Most of you received a letter from me this week about preparing Christ the King for the next steps. If you did not receive it, make sure you are a registered parishioner.

If you are over the age of 18, it's time for you to register under your own name and start participating in the life of the parish as a young adult, even if you still live at home. We sent everyone a copy of their total contributions to the parish that were made last year. The letter has been a good conversation starter. Even I was surprised at my total giving. I thought I was giving more than what the records show. But I have not increased my giving for several years and I know that things have gone up considerably especially these past couple of years. So I'm going to increase my giving by 10%.

You have seen in the bulletin that our collections have been 10-15% under budget all year. This number negatively affects our school subsidy, parish events and our maintenance projects. If you consider yourself to be a participating parishioner at Christ the King please prayerfully consider where you should be invited to contribute. If you have not increased your contributions this year I invite you to think and pray about increasing. Like they say This is a pay to pray operation, so please pray about what you feel the Lord is calling you to give. Christ the King has been hit like everyone else with inflation, pandemic,

and uncertainty with a new pastor, new president and new war. Some of you may be struggling financially which could be an opportunity to place your trust in God even more.

Some of you are doing very well but just haven't been asked to help so here it is. Some of You were very generous to make large gifts to get the parish through Covid but this parish, like most parishes, has not recovered. Those large gifts incentivized by Covid have stopped. It was a big relief for two years but now that we are returning to regular parish activities, the costs of commodities and utilities, as you are well aware, have increased considerably and even nearly doubled in some areas. We did have over 20 families sign up for auto draft or Faith Direct last week so Thank You for answering the call to support the parish.

I'm just asking everyone to take another look like I did, and help the parish keep up with inflation which is around 9%. Your Finance Council is taking this very seriously and I really appreciate all the hours and effort they are putting into this and they are staying on top of it and plan to give a parish report before year end. But everyone needs to participate. Last Sunday I mentioned that the coming months will Have a lot of different opportunities in which to participate. You have to prayerfully choose the ones you feel God is guiding you to support. After your parish of course.

Discernment is usually between two good choices, a higher good and a lesser good. Choosing can be difficult. Prioritizing is necessary to make proper choices. That narrow gate we have to pass through does not allow us to take much with us. There's no gate check to pick up later because what we leave behind in order to get to the other side just leaves more room for all the new things we will be given. So how do we get through this narrow gate?

Jesus says we have to strive! For many will try but won't be strong enough. So it sounds like a very narrow passageway. And There's no getting stuck. It's either you get all the way through or you don't. How do we get through it? How do I leave my baggage, my pride and my nonsense at the gate so I can get through? The lord gives us everything we need to slip through. Maybe we look at the four Ss. Sabbath, Silence, Solitude, Slowing.

First S is the Sabbath. Sunday is a day for God. Mass is the place where it's nearly impossible to work or worry if I am worshipping. Worshipping God starts at home on Monday. If you pray for your priests on Monday and deacons on Tuesday, read the readings on Wednesday, make your Sunday plans on Thursday, eat fish on Fridays or else make an act of service or charity, and finish your work on Saturday, then you are ready to feast on Sunday. Rest and leisure are made to renew and restore our soul so it doesn't get so prickly and dry. So that's the Sabbath.

The second S is silence. That is Gods first language. It can be ours if we start going to language school. It can be a very difficult language to learn but when you meet some else that's learned to speak silence there is no greater peace or friendship simply being with someone you trust and love. Silence is the second half of prayer. The first half is talking to God, the second half is listening.

The third S is solitude which is very different from loneliness. If you're an introvert this is not your escape route. Solitude is an intentional mindfulness that God is present in this moment. You can have solitude in a crowd if you are aware that Christ is present there with you. Solitude is a peaceful contentment whether you are alone or in a concert. It is a remembering God is with you.

Slowing is the fourth S. You can't just make a running lunge for the narrow gate. You can hurt someone. A methodical slowing down in life is caring for your spirit. We often neglect our soul by over animating our mind with information or entertainment. Slowing down to enjoy nature and created beauty is a joy to the senses. These are all attributes of Jesus.

Sabbathing well, Silence, Solitude, Slowing down: Jesus recognizes himself within us when we do and practice the things He does. If we don't practice those things he does not recognize us and we don't get to come through the gate.

What do I need to start giving away? What is my baggage I need to discard so I can get through that gate?