

**The Blessings of the Kingdom
Christ the King (A)
(Mt 25:31-46)**

We have many loyalties that help define our identity, and groups that we belong to as a result: nation, political party, socio-economic circles, family, sports team. But for a Catholic, none should be deeper than the identity which makes us a citizen of the Kingdom of God, which we received in Baptism and Confirmation. When we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, we celebrate our Christian identity.

The King unites his country as its head, and is himself the symbol of that national unity. In Christ we are one, and this unity transcends all human divisions: in Christ we are catholic. Jesus therefore provides us our identity, and not merely by showing us the perfect example to emulate. Through the anointing of Baptism we are made “other Christs,” sharing in his very identity as Son of God.

As we honor Jesus Christ as King of heaven and earth, let us therefore remember and appreciate what it is to be Christian; that our fundamental identity is to belong to this Kingdom, to which we must have the highest loyalty.

In addition to uniting the people as one, good King provides for the corporate well-being of his people. His rule is a blessing that brings security and prosperity. In the Kingdom of God, Christ provides for an abundant Life. As the Psalm proclaims, “*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want, in verdant pastures he gives me repose... you spread the table before me... my cup overflows.*” Through Baptism we are blessed with all the riches of heaven, entrusted with God’s treasures in order to experience the fullness of eternal life, and even on earth enjoy the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Last Sunday’s “Parable of the Talents” illustrates how the King entrusts his treasure to each servant for the prosperity of the Kingdom. But the citizens of the Kingdom must devote themselves to work, investing those riches so as to derive benefit and increase for themselves and others. In today’s Parable of Judgment, Jesus explains the mechanism which brings about that Christian prosperity: it is the Works of Mercy. By making personal sacrifices for the well-being of others, we ensure our own well-being as well. According to the Prayer of St. Francis, “it is in giving that we receive.”

Where Christians live the Gospel and put the teachings of Christ into practice, people are enriched with the blessings of God’s Kingdom, which is one of justice and peace, love and mercy, holiness and healing. The Gospel changes the world and makes it a better place. Where Christianity thrives, society becomes

more just, the poor are served, the family is strengthened, and wars are ended. Christianity builds up a “Civilization of Love.”

If Christ is to be honored as King among all nations, his Kingship must first be established in our heart. It is there first of all that justice, love, and peace must flourish. From our soul these graces must then flow into our relationships especially at home, and from there into the greater society.

Jesus Christ came from heaven to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God. In order to do this the Son of God had to become man and assert his dominion on earth through miracles and signs. It is more accurate to say that God came into the world in order to *reestablish* and *reclaim* the Kingdom of God in men’s lives. At the first creation the dominion and blessings were there, but they were lost, usurped by a false king and tyrant who promised life but brought death.

Through his death and resurrection Christ the King has confronted the evil one, overcome him, broken open the kingdom of death, and liberated the souls enslaved by his cruelty. “*Chrisus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat.*” Christ has conquered, and Christ now begins his reign in heaven. One more thing remains, which is for him to return and establish that reign fully on earth. The Lord’s second coming will see the final end of the devil and his legions who will be sealed up in the fiery pit, the end of death, sin, and suffering.

In the meantime, the Church exists in a state of warfare. The Kingdom of God is proclaimed and asserted, but a battle is underway in which the devil makes war on any who would follow Christ. Baptism includes a ceremony by which we formally renounce the false lord and his kingdom of darkness, and make an oath of allegiance (the profession of faith) to the true Lord. Christian life will include this ongoing struggle against the spiritual forces of evil. We must be prepared for this spiritual struggle, and utilize the weapons God gives, which include prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, i.e. the Works of Mercy.

Just as the Kingdom of God begins within but ultimately has its effect in the world, the spiritual battle against the devil will be fought not only on the world stage against evil powers, but first of all within the soul, and secondly in relationships. If we want to change the world, and establish the Kingdom of God, the devil must be conquered by rooting out the sin in our soul, and maintaining holy and loving relationships with all the people in our lives.

Let us honor and serve Christ the King by undertaking the Works of Mercy, purifying our lives of sin, and bringing the blessings of God into a world suffering the ravages of evil.