

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe – A
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Kirkland, Washington
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Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
Psalm 23
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28
(Mark 11:9, 10) Matthew 25:31-46

Christ the King – Is Jesus Christ Your Savior and Your King?

Today is the last Sunday of the liturgical year for 2017. Ordinary Time comes to a conclusion this week, and next Sunday we, as a Church, will start over with a new year of entering into the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. Next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent; the first of four weeks of preparing for Christmas; preparing to welcome Jesus Christ into our world.ⁱ And just as we will begin the new liturgical year by welcoming the Newborn King into our world,ⁱⁱ today we conclude the passing liturgical year by honoring Jesus Christ as King of the Universe in this Solemnity also known as Christ the King.

This celebration was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI as way to counter the rise of secularism and political dictatorships that were more and more forcing Jesus Christ out of public life.ⁱⁱⁱ Pope Pius XI established the celebration of this feast to occur on a Sunday toward the end of the liturgical year in order to set a “crowning glory upon the mysteries of the life of Christ” that had been celebrated throughout the year.^{iv} Furthermore, to remind us that – as our King – there is no part of our lives that should be without Jesus Christ; no part of our beings that should exclude Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not just King of the Universe, meaning everything outside of us. Jesus Christ must be King of our very selves: our bodies, our minds, our wills, and our hearts.^v

Therefore, an important question for us to consider on this day is:

How do I know if Jesus Christ is the King of my body, mind, will, and heart?

The answer comes in today's Gospel, which, once again, is the "crowning glory" of everything we have heard about the life of Jesus Christ from the Gospel of Matthew throughout this liturgical year. If there was something that we missed; something that we didn't understand; something that we forgot from Jesus' teachings throughout this past year, today Jesus summarizes everything, and He speaks to us in very plain terms. It is good for us to believe that Jesus Christ is King of the Universe, but it is only by our *actions* that we will know if Jesus Christ is truly King of our very selves.^{vi}

The favorite question for a student to ask the teacher is: "What's going to be on the final exam?" Today, Jesus tells us that our actions of how we treat our least brothers and sisters is what's going to be on the "final exam." How we treat our least brothers and sisters reveals if Jesus Christ is the King of my body, mind, will, and heart.^{vii}

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Many of you are familiar with the preaching of Father Larry Richards. He is a priest from Pennsylvania who hosts a weekly show on EWTN/Sacred Heart Radio; has written some popular books; and travels the country giving retreats and missions, including one here at Holy Family a few years ago. Regarding the question of having Jesus Christ as our King, he had this to say: "everyone wants Jesus to be their Savior but [fewer people want] Jesus to be their [King]. He cannot be [our] Savior unless He is [our King]."^{viii}

His point is this: It's easier for us to be attracted to the image of Jesus as our Savior because of all that He continuously does for us. We ask for His help when we are worried or in some kind of trouble. We pray for His healing when we or a loved one are sick. We ask Him to repair broken relationships. We want Him to bring peace to the world. We ask for His mercy and forgiveness when we confess our sins. We ask Him to nourish us, strengthen us, and

conform our lives to His when we eat His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. We want Him to be our Savior in all these ways – and He also wants to be and is our Savior in all these ways when we call on Him.

Ultimately, He is our Savior by leading us into eternal life with Him in Heaven – the Kingdom where He sits on his glorious throne.^{ix} He cannot be compartmentalized as *only* our Savior – for Him to be our Savior means for Him to be our King. They are one and the same thing. But our salvation does not wait for us in Heaven – salvation and Heaven begin in this life when we obey His commandments, starting with His commandment to love one another.^x For when we are in the presence of love, we know we are in the presence of God.

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The great Russian author, Leo Tolstoy, wrote a short story in 1885 on this theme titled, *Where Love Is, There God Is Also*.^{xi} It is a story about an old shoemaker named Martin who had fallen into despair and was questioning his relationship with God. One night, he was awakened by a voice:

“Martin!”

“Who is here?” he replied. He looked around, saw no one, and fell back asleep.

Soon the voice awakened him again:

“Martin! Ah, Martin! look tomorrow on the street. I am coming.”

Martin was not sure whether it was a dream, but as he worked the next day, he kept watch out the window. Soon he saw an old man out in the street who had become worn out from shoveling snow. Martin tapped on the window and said to him:

“Come in, warm yourself a little.”

Martin shared tea and conversation with the man; helped him get warm and regain his strength; and even told him that he was waiting for Christ to visit him on this very day.

Martin returned to his work, keeping an eye on the street. Soon he saw a young mother with not enough clothes to keep herself and her baby warm. He opened the door and cried out:

“My good woman...why are you standing in the cold? Come into my room, where it is warm.”

He fed the woman and her baby; gave her a warm coat and some money; and even told her that he was waiting for Christ to visit him on this very day.

Martin got back to work, but soon noticed an older woman out in the street grab hold of a young boy for stealing one of her apples. Martin rushed out the door and convinced the woman to show mercy on the boy. After helping the two reconcile, he watched them walk away together as friends, with the boy carrying her heavy bag for her.

By then the day was turning into evening. Martin finished up his work and began to settle in for the night, thinking that he had been mistaken; disappointed that Christ, it seemed, was not going to visit him on this day, after all.

But as Martin turned to prayer and reflected on his day that night, he heard the same voice from the night before whisper to him:

“Martin – ah, Martin! did you not recognize me?”

“Who?” Martin exclaimed.

“Me, it was I.” Then in the corner of the room he saw a vision of the old man smiling...

“And it was I.” ...and he saw a vision of the young woman holding her laughing baby...

“And it was I.” ...and he saw a vision of the old woman and the young boy walking together.

Martin’s “soul rejoiced; he crossed himself...[and he] understood that his dream had not deceived him; that the Saviour really called on him that day.”

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My friends, Martin doubted his relationship with God – he wasn’t sure if Jesus Christ was his King. But it happened through very simple acts of love – acts that any of us can do – that he learned that, yes, Jesus Christ was his Savior and his King.^{xii} As this liturgical year ends and we begin the new one, let us also be sure to learn and relearn this same important lesson again and

again. If you want to be sure if Jesus Christ is your Savior and your King, simply do an act of love...and another one...and another one...and allow Jesus to show you the answer.

ⁱ See Isaiah 40:3-5; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23

ⁱⁱ Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 2:2

ⁱⁱⁱ Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, 11 December 1925; in particular, see No. 32

^{iv} *Quas Primas* No. 29

^v *Quas Primas* No. 33

^{vi} See William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 2 Revised Edition*, 325:

“This is one of the most vivid parables Jesus ever spoke, and the lesson is crystal clear—that God will judge us in accordance with our reaction to human need. His judgment does not depend on the knowledge we have amassed or the fame that we have acquired, or the fortune that we have gained, but on the help that we have given.”

^{vii} Matthew 25:40, 45

^{viii} Father Larry Richards, Homily for Christ the King – Cycle A, 23 November 2014

^{ix} Matthew 25:31

^x See Adrien Nocent, OSB, *The Liturgical Year: Volume Three: Sundays Two to Thirty-Four in Ordinary Time*, tr. by Matthew J. O’Connell, 172: “Here the Lord sets down only one requirement for entering his kingdom: love of neighbor.”

^{xi} Leo Tolstoy, “Where Love Is, There God Is Also” in *Tolstoy’s Tales of Courage and Conflict*, ed. by Charles Neider, tr. by Nathan Haskell Dole

^{xii} See Barclay, 325: “(i) It must be help in simple things. The things which Jesus picks out—giving a hungry man a meal, or a thirsty man a drink, welcoming a stranger, cheering the sick, visiting the prisoner—are things which anyone can do.”