

Bishop Bradley's Reflections on the Sunday Readings

November 22, 2015 34th Sunday of the Year and the

Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ the King

On this last Sunday of the church year, as we struggle with the first major, pre-winter snow storm, we celebrate one of our most beautiful feasts---Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe! And since this feast also concludes the Church year, this Sunday is also an appropriate time to think about how we have grown in our faith, as well as to thank God for all the spiritual blessings we have received during this liturgical year.

Coincidentally this great and solemn feast falls on the weekend just before Thanksgiving. I hope that all of you will have an opportunity to join with those who are close to you---family members and friends---just a few days from now. Thanksgiving is the closest thing we have as Americans to a “national *holyday*,” when we not only enjoy a delicious dinner and one another’s company, but we have the opportunity to give thanks to God for all our blessings: our families, faith, friends and the freedoms of our country. And on this Sunday which prepares us for this Thanksgiving “holyday, we take the time here to give thanks that Jesus Christ is the King of the universe and, hopefully, the King of each of our hearts.

The scripture readings we heard today give us two distinct perspectives of what a King is. The first two readings give us a vision and a dream of what the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom will be. The First Reading from the Book of Daniel, one of the last books in the Old Testament, and the Second Reading, from the Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament, both tell us that at the end of human history, the Kingdom of God will be fully realized, and He will come on the clouds and take us all into the Kingdom of Heaven for all eternity. The Gospel Reading gives us a different---a realistic---perspective of the here-and-now of human history. Jesus, the Son of God, was put on trial by God’s people and tried by Pontius Pilate. Pilate tried to somehow fit Jesus into his narrow understanding of that word “king.” But Jesus expanded the meaning of what a King is, and told Pilate what His Kingship and His Kingdom really were when He said: *“You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.”* God’s Kingdom is about those ultimate realities:

harmony, love, reconciliation, peace, justice and **truth**. Pilate could not understand, so he condemned Jesus to death. But that did not stop Jesus from being the King, and it certainly did not end His Kingdom.

Next Sunday, we begin a new Church year. We begin the Season of Advent looking forward to the celebration of Jesus' birth, when God's Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. This Sunday we end the Church year seeing Jesus our King, condemned to death on the Cross. We begin each Church year at the crib; we end each year at the cross! And both demand from us that we drop to our knees in adoration of the God Who unconditionally loves us.

And so the question for us today is: what is our ultimate purpose? Why were we born? Why did we come into this world? What is Truth, and to what degree do we conform our lives to the search for Truth? Hopefully our answers to those very important questions can be consistent with Jesus' answers; we need to have as our most important goals in life what Jesus identified His most important goal in Life is:: to testify to the ultimate realities of God's Kingdom---that is, to testify to the Truth.

Even in the midst of the growing hostility, violence and terroristic attacks going on in our world, Jesus reminds us to confront hatred with the power of His love. He continues to caution us to not be afraid of the fears of this world for, through His suffering, death and resurrection, He has overcome the world. For us to truly celebrate this Feast of Jesus, the King of the Universe, He must first be the King of our hearts, and we must imitate Him in the ways we practice works of love and mercy for those we meet in our lives.

On this last Sunday of the Church year, as we think back on this Liturgical Year, let us pray that we can honestly see that Jesus has a bigger place in our lives than this time last year. Let us ask Jesus our King to rule our hearts, to let us keep hearing His voice, to more faithfully love others in His Name, and to help us to be more committed to praying and working for God's Kingdom of harmony, peace, justice and truth.

God bless you, now and always.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Bishop Paul J. Bradley

Post Script: Dear Family of Faith, it is customary on this Feast of Christ the King,

that each of us takes this occasion to renew our commitment to Christ by praying the following beautiful prayer. I include it here for you to consider praying today, and every day.

Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Most gentle Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon us humbly prostrate before your altar. We are Yours, and Yours we wish to be. But to be more surely united with You, behold, each one of us freely consecrates him/herself today to Your most Sacred Heart. Many, indeed, have never known You. Many, too, despising Your precepts, have rejected You. Have mercy on them all, most Merciful Jesus, and draw them to Your Sacred Heart. Be King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken You, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned You. Grant that they may quickly return to their Father's House, lest they die of wretchedness and hunger. Be King of those whom heresy holds in error or discord keeps aloof; call them back to the "harbor of Truth" and the unity of Faith, so that soon there may be but One Flock and One Shepherd. Grant O Lord to Your Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm. Give peace and order to all nations, and make the earth resound from pole to pole with one cry: Praise to the Divine Heart that wrought our salvation; to It be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.