

Homily: Nov. 20, 2022

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today, we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. This day is the pinnacle of the liturgical year—the grand conclusion—the day toward which every other day has pointed.

What kind of king are we celebrating today in Jesus Christ? In the first reading, he is the Son of David. Therefore, he is a shepherd king, who is attentive, good-hearted, wise, and guiding.

In the second reading from Paul's letter to the Colossians, we learn that Jesus Christ is the king of the universe. Why? Paul says Jesus Christ is the firstborn of all creation. All things were created through him and for him. Finally, by dying on the cross out of love, he brought all creation together in one grand reconciliation.

As the image of God, we know that Jesus Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of love. So Jesus is a king of love. He was not an ordinary king who ruled by power, armies, wealth, palaces, and gold crowns. King Jesus was quite the opposite.

At the last supper, Jesus proclaimed that the greatest would be the servant of all. Jesus demonstrated his message by washing the apostles' feet. He was humble by riding a young donkey into Jerusalem. No wonder the powerful people, namely the rulers and soldiers, mocked Jesus. They did not understand that Jesus was the most powerful, precisely by dying on the cross. He forgave even his crucifiers. He was a king of forgiveness. All of creation will feel the power of Jesus' reconciliation forever.

Jesus' whole life, death, and resurrection, which we call the paschal mystery, witnessed the power of true love. The crucifiers killed the physical being of Jesus. But they could not kill his essence. Christ's loving being and spirit resurrected into a broader and fuller presence and power.

How is the powerful love of the King of the Universe present today? Pope Francis has been displaying Christ's humble yet powerful servant love. Francis washed the feet of female and male prisoners, including Muslims, a month after he became pope. He invites church leaders to smell like their sheep and to pay attention to the weakest and most marginalized. Pope Francis has gone to small countries and chosen cardinals from such regions. He refused to stay in the formal papal quarters of the Vatican but took up home in Martha House at the entrance of St. Peter's Plaza.

How do we witness the love of our King of the Universe? We must let the King of the Universe rule our whole being so that we, too, love as Jesus loved. In our society today, we must refrain from all jeering and sneering and practice respect and affirmation. We can follow the example of the second criminal by acknowledging our shortcomings. Like Jesus, we can forgive our enemies. We can visit people who are very lonely and depressed. We can volunteer at Vincent de Paul units in our parish or at its Phoenix center on 420 W. Watkins Rd., just north of here. Volunteer at facilities helping women make life-giving choices when challenged with unplanned pregnancies. Bottom line—be open to offering hope and new life to those suffering, near and far. By our every truly loving effort, the universal King of Love transforms our world into a new world called paradise--heaven.

Let us pray, “THY KINGDOM COME QUICKLY.”