

Homily—34th (last) Sunday OT; Christ the King

And so once again, we arrive at the last Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Next week we begin the season of Advent.

Next week we begin a new year on Church calendar.

Next week we begin to wait once again, in joyful anticipation of the coming savior.

Next week our thoughts will turn to preparation, gifts, parties, & other festivities.

But before all of that, we celebrate the last feast of OT; the feast of *Christ the King*. We always end Ordinary Time by honoring the King. Why?

Because this feast reminds us of two things; first, the result of Jesus' sacrifice, which ended in his glorification, and second, the need for our sacrifices if we want to share in that glory.

You see, our image of "king" is skewed. Our image of "king" like so many things has been secularized.

When we think of "king" we think of luxury, lavishness, wealth, and gold crowns. We think of power. We think of someone who doesn't need to ask anybody permission for what he wants to do.

But in the Hebrew mind, what made a king was not all those things.

In the Hebrew mind the king was the servant of the people.

The King had the responsibility of making sure all the people had what they needed to survive; to make sure everyone played by the rules; to make sure taxes weren't forcing people to live in poverty; to make sure there was a military to protect the people from foreign invaders.

So many of the prophets blast the kings because they were ignoring their responsibility to the poor, the widows, the orphans, and failing to protect the people from idolatry, because that was the task of the king also.

The king was expected to set the tone for the morality of the nation.

The king was responsible for the care of his subjects.

Jesus succeeds where so many kings throughout history failed, because Jesus perfectly fulfilled his kingly role by perfectly serving his people.

Jesus is priest, Jesus is prophet, and Jesus is King, and we as baptized Christians share in each of those roles. Jesus is a priest. What does a priest do? Offers sacrifices to God.

Christ did that through the cross.

When we sacrifice little things for the kingdom we share in that priestly role.

Jesus is a prophet. What does a prophet do? Relays the message of God.

Christ is the word made flesh that conveys the will of the Father.

Whenever we share the faith, whenever we challenge or convict someone's conscience, we share in the prophetic role of Christ.

And Jesus is King. The King was the servant of the people. So Jesus healed.

Jesus fed. Jesus forgave. And Jesus gave the sacraments to protect us from idolatry and immorality.

And so whenever we give food to the hungry, whenever we comfort the suffering, whenever we forgive, whenever we fight against immorality, we share in the Kingly role of Jesus.

John Paul II said it best when he said, "To serve is to reign."

Why is this so important? Why should we celebrate this feast?

Because those who do not have a king will make themselves kings.

Those who do not follow a king who serves others, will only live to serve themselves. That's why this feast is important!

We cannot share the glory unless we follow the example!

I'm friends with another priest who hails from my hometown of Westerly, Father Brian Sistare, but before he transferred to the diocese, Father Brian was Fr. Juniper Mary, of the Franciscan Friars of the renewal.

I got to know him after he had a powerful reversion back to faith while in college, and like me, and Dean Perri, who's now pastor of Our Lady of Loretto in East Providence, we all volunteered as youth ministers for Father Ray Suriani at Saint Pius X parish in Westerly.

When Brian he became friar Juniper several years later, he would regularly take a bag of sandwiches, and walk from the friary in the South Bronx, through lower Manhattan, to

Columbia University, giving sandwiches to the homeless people he met on the streets.

Once he was ordained a priest, he served among the poorest people in the world in Honduras for two years. I always admired Brian for that.

It takes a special kind of person to live in that poverty, and do that work.

Brian is a King. Brian has the heart of one who does Kingly service, and he continues that service as pastor of a very poor parish in Woonsocket, Sacred Heart.

There was another man once who truly lived out the kingly service of Jesus Christ.

This man was born in Mexico in 1891.

He was born of well to do parents and was trained as an engineer, where it looked like he would have a life of money, status, success and ease.

But love of our Lord, and Our Lady of Guadeloupe, compelled him to leave his work and join the Jesuit order of priests.

He studied in Texas, California, Nicaragua, Spain, and finally Belgium where he ordained a priest in 1925.

After repeated requests, his superiors finally consented to send him back to his troubled homeland.

He had only been home for 23 days when the Mexican government suppressed all public worship, forcing the Catholic Church to go underground.

While many priests fled the country, this man stayed to minister to the people.

The priests that stayed were subject to arrest, prison, and execution.

In addition to celebrating Mass and the sacraments in secret, he also collected and distributed food and supplies to the poor of the city.

He wore a number of disguises, dressing up like a beggar to baptize an infant.

He even disguised himself as a policeman, so he could slip into police headquarters and hear the confessions of the prisoners condemned to die.

This man, along with two of his brothers, was caught.

With no due process, and despite a stay of execution, they were ordered to be shot.

As he was led before the firing squad, he forgave his executioners and told them not to grieve, because he was needed in heaven, so he could teach everyone there how to do the “la Bamba.”

His last request was to pray a silent rosary, by the bullet riddled wall.

After rejecting the traditional blindfold, he stood before the firing squad, arms outstretched like a cross.

And as the bullets rang out, Saint Miguel Pro cried out with all his strength, “*Viva, Christo Rey!*” Long live Christ the King.