

Holy Spirit Province

PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

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HONOURING JESUS CHRIST OUR KING

- How have you experienced people during the Covid-19 restrictions? More selfish than generous, or more generous than selfish?
- Name the values of Jesus that mean the most to you.
- What standards of judgment will Jesus our Judge be using, when we come to him to be judged? Do those standards surprise you?
- What kind of society did Jesus our King want, and work to achieve?
- What is he like as our King? How have you found him?
- As his subjects, what are we like?

In the Preface to our Eucharistic Prayer today, we'll hear the kingdom of Jesus Christ described as 'a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace'. Recently this good news came my way. A little five-year-old boy from the prep grade at St Mary's School nearby rang the doorbell of the Parish Centre. He was about to go with his family on a holiday to India, but before setting out he brought all he had saved up for the holiday - \$13.50 - to the parish. 'Give it to buy a Christmas present,' he asked the Parish Secretary, 'for some poor child.'

Surely in a somewhat selfish world that's inspirational! Even though only five years old, he was already taking seriously the values that Jesus both taught and practised - truth, justice, and love. He was recognising already that Jesus is both king of his life and king of the whole world.

In the gospel today, Jesus describes the General Judgment that will take place at the end of the world. He makes it clear that as king of the world he will be the judge. He also makes it clear that the standard of judgment is this: 'as long as you did this to one of the least of these brothers [or sisters] of mine, you did it to me.' Or, on the other hand, 'in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.'

So, the basis of his judgment is our love for others, our practical charity shown in care and kindness. To hungry people, thirsty ones, newcomers and strangers, those without sufficient clothes, sick persons, prisoners, and other shut-ins, persons in everyday need in one way or another! (Even as I echo those words of Jesus to you now, I am shuddering inside about my own inadequate performance).

Was it not to bring in a new world of overflowing compassion that Jesus called ‘the kingdom of God’ the very reason that he came among us, and the very reason that he stays with us? Did he not come to bring to an end all hostility, all wars and all terror? Did he not both live and die to set people free from hunger, poverty, want and disease? Did he not come down to earth to change our hearts, to rid us of all evil and sin, to redeem, liberate, and transform us? Did he not come to bring among us, justice, joy, peace, health and wellbeing? Did he not come among us to change our world for the better, by working with God for a better world?

His kingship, then, is not like that of other kings and rulers. It is not about wealth and power. It is not about domination and control. It is not about military might, conquests, and national security. It is not about splendour, magnificence, mansions, palaces and feasting. No! His kingship is about truth and honesty. It’s about goodness and generosity. It’s about service and self-sacrifice. It’s about justice and love. It’s about mercy and care. Mercy and care for all people, but especially for those who are poor, broken-hearted, neglected or ignored!

At the trial of Jesus, Pontius Pilate found it very hard to practise both truth and justice. Witnessing to the truth was something that Pilate was finding particularly hard to do. He had already found Jesus innocent. If he was ready to act on that truth, surely, he would have set Jesus free? It seems, then, that while he might have been sincerely concerned about Jesus’ safety, he was not concerned enough that Jesus was totally innocent. For he refused to act on that truth when it was in his power to do so!

What about us? Do you and I qualify as subjects of his kingdom? Do we belong to him or not? Do we call him ‘Our Lord’, and if we do, do we really mean it and live it?

Today our current liturgical year is coming to an end. Next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent and the start of the Year B Cycle of Readings. Today, Jesus our King is inviting us to bring this year of the Church to an end, by choosing him once again as our Lord, our Saviour, and our Shepherd, and by recommitting ourselves to live his teachings, his values, and his kind and gentle rule.

With the help of his amazing grace, are you and I ready and willing, then, to renew our commitment to him during the rest of our prayer today? Really and truly, are we ready to re-commit ourselves to care for others, as Jesus did, and especially the most neglected and forgotten persons around us, and more particularly those struggling to stay alive and safe during this Covid pandemic? Let’s try hard to make that commitment now, make it from the heart, and make it genuine, whole-hearted, and ongoing!

bgleesoncp@gmail.com