

Homily for November 24th 2019

Our Lord Jesus Christ; the King of the Universe.

Today we come to the end of the Liturgical Year with a Solemnity that has a confident and all-encompassing title: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe”.

The second clause of the title states an absolute truth, Jesus Christ is the King of the Universe. Because Jesus Christ is God, Paul can declare unequivocally:

in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹

This is one of the clearest statements in the New Testament announcing Jesus’ Universal Rule. Jesus is the adhesive power that, so to speak, holds the universe together. However, this is a rule that from our very limited earthly and human perspective we do not yet see visibly manifested so as to be obvious to all.

What is more obvious is the cacophony of voices gathered around the Cross that are in opposition to Jesus. But here is what the Church wants to teach us today. That in the midst of the voices that are antagonistic and reject Jesus we are learning something stated in the first clause of our Feast’s Title. The one on the middle Cross is “Our Lord Jesus Christ”. The pronoun “our” states that those of us in the Church are like the thief on Jesus’ right. He turns to Jesus, and addressing him by name, asks to be remembered when Jesus assumes His Resurrected Body, and Universal Reign.

The dying man recognizes who Jesus really is. Even though the other criminal and those at the foot of the Cross revile Jesus, the dying thief becomes the first member of the Church to experience the saving effects of the Cross because he knew that Jesus is the Lord.

All of us gathered today join with the criminal and Paul in declaring Jesus is:

the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.²

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Col 1:16–17). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

² [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Col 1:18–20). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Here Paul brings together in one sentence the affirmation of Jesus' humanity, "he is the firstborn from the dead", and his divinity, "in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." The restoration of which Paul goes on to write about is the theme of today's Collect:

*Almighty ever-living God,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of the universe,
grant, we pray,
that the whole creation, set free from slavery,
may render your majesty service
and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.³*

Now think about these words from Colossians and the Collect by hearing again the different voices of today's Gospel:

First let me present the voices of derision and conflict:

- but the leaders scoffed at him,⁴
- The soldiers also mocked him⁵
- One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him⁶

These are the voices, that if you were at the Cross on Good Friday that would have been most obvious and vocal. From a distance, this is all you would have heard.

- He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"⁷
- If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"⁸

³ [*The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II.*](#) (2011). (Third Typical Edition, p. 505). Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.*](#) (1993). (Lk 23:35). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.*](#) (1993). (Lk 23:36). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.*](#) (1993). (Lk 23:39). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.*](#) (1993). (Lk 23:35). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

⁸ [*The Holy Bible.*](#) (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Lk 23:37). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

- Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”⁹

The voices of alienation, hatred, skepticism calumny. But in the midst of all that vitriol is the conversation that brings to the one person, who sees our Lord Jesus Christ, peace. Speaking to the other criminal:

Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.¹⁰

Here is an insight getting to the heart of this Solemnity. Apart from Jesus Christ, at the end of the day all we are left with is getting what we deserve, there is only anger and disintegration. However because the one dying on the Middle Cross is Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, the madness of the faithless crowd gives way to the quiet assurance of reconciling peace when Jesus declares:

Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”¹¹

It has always been the way that when the world becomes increasingly antagonistic to the Gospel that the Holy Spirit raises up people who will say in the face of such denial of Jesus Christ, that he is our Lord and the King of the Universe. And it is because of this that he alone can assure us paradise beyond the crosses and confusion of our earthly lives.

Pope Pius XI understood this when he declared that this Solemnity in December 1925 was to end the Christian Year. Think of what had happened in the years before 1925. The First War, the rise of atheistic communism, forms of selfish capitalism. For the first time in a very long time in Europe’s history, you had nations establishing themselves without any reference to the reign and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So in the context of the conflict of the kingdoms of the world, Pope Pius XI institutes a feast, a Solemnity, to lift up the fact that above all the nations of the world, there stands one King and one King only—and that is Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe.

In our day there are many voices that would drown out the declaration “Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe”. We live in a time where, as Bishop McGrattan has shared in different contexts where I have been present, the media and public opinion is opposed to the Catholic World View. It is in response to this opposition that the Bishops of Alberta are working in many ways to articulate a comprehensive and coherent way to tell the Catholic Story. This is so those

⁹ [The Holy Bible](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Lk 23:39). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Lk 23:40–41). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition](#). (1993). (Lk 23:43). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

who belong to the Church can with greater confidence respond to the opposing voices of the world at the foot of the Cross.

One area where much is being done in this regard is in relation to Catholic Education. Through the Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education (GrACE) the school boards in the province that represent the 180,000 Catholic Students and their families are speaking with one voice about the value and importance of insuring the future of publically funded Catholic Education in our Province. At a time where there are those who would want to see Public Funding for Catholic Education ended we have a responsibility and opportunity to let our voice be heard, like the thief promised paradise.

Alberta Education is asking Albertans to fill out a survey that looks at choices in Education. I filled the survey out on Thursday and found its format engaging. There were some questions where you indicated your answer from the list provided and others where the respondent was provided a box to write paragraph answers.

The deadline for completing the survey, is December 6th. I would like to request that you take the time to complete the survey. Later today there will be a link to it on our Website and Facebook Page.

By joining with others as Grateful Advocates for Catholic Education we can share with Alberta Education our conviction that the Separate School System is a trust we want protected and supported as a public system.

What a practical way for us to state on this last Sunday of the Liturgical Year:

Our Lord Jesus Christ; the King of the Universe.