

From The Pastor

Jesus Christ is Lord, now and forever! This is the Good News and truth of our faith. This, the last Sunday of the liturgical year, celebrates the feast of Jesus Christ as King. Today's Mass is a declaration of all we have celebrated and received through our worship during the year. Our faith is effective and alive because of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Living in the truth and consolation of our faith gives us the confidence and surety to face with patience the trials and challenges that are ours. These challenges come in all shapes and sizes. For myself, I am facing another surgery to upgrade my pacemaker. Because of significant episode(s) of a racing and erratic heart rate, I need a defibrillator to respond to this troublesome condition. My surgery is Monday this week. I expect to be in the hospital overnight and then recovering at the rectory the rest of the week. I expect to be ready to celebrate Mass next weekend, and before long return to my busy schedule. I appreciate your prayerful support.

Today's feast is a significant one because it brings power and clarity to the truth of God in Christ. Our faith is meaningful and effective because of the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. This feast proclaims this truth and explains its meaning.

The second reading from the letter to the Colossians is an early profession of faith that expresses the identity and the mission of Jesus. It is inclusive of the whole Godhead. It proclaims our thanks to the Father for the gift of Jesus, who 'through his blood has made us worthy to share the lot of the saints in light'. We learn that Jesus is 'the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation, for whom and through whom all things were created'. This is to say that Jesus always existed in the Father. Jesus was not 'created', but existed in the Father and was given to the world as the 'Word made Flesh'. Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary becoming fully human while remaining fully divine. He is the God-Man who alone can be the mediator of salvation. The death of Jesus as the divine God who fully accepted the human condition reconciles and redeems all that is disordered by sin. The divine Creator, through the Son, redeems the created.

How does this work? St. Paul expresses the mystery in the second Letter to the Corinthians, (2Cor 5:21). 'He who did not know sin became sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him'. On the Cross, Jesus takes all human sin into his human/divine person. Jesus accepts the reality and consequence of all human sin. Jesus accepted and experienced separation from the Father. Jesus dies to defeat the separation caused by sin that we might be reconciled to the Father. In the human/divine person of Jesus, God dies to himself to restore us to life.

This is why/how Jesus becomes Lord. It is only out of love, and accomplished by the power of love on the Cross. To say Jesus is Lord is to acknowledge that Jesus has power and authority over all that is. He is the author of all creation and has power over all things by his full surrender to and victory over death. See Philippians 2:6-11.

For us to yield to and place ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus Christ means that we give ourselves in an absolute way to nothing in this world other than Christ. For all the things we have, or use, or enjoy and value in this life, we give ourselves in an absolute way only to Christ. This truth gives us confidence in faith despite the resistance of our human spirit. For some, this will be a great challenge that will stir a rebellion of resistance against what feels like a loss or limitation to our human freedom. In a culture of entitlement, we resist anyone telling us what we can or cannot do. The reality is that, in faith, the authority of Christ is our freedom and our peace to live in love without fear.

This authority comes through the mystery of the Cross. The effective power of redemption is love not suffering. Jesus died out of love for us to defeat evil and for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus defeats and claims authority over the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers of darkness by the power and authority of love that belongs to God alone. This is our joy and our hope, the promise of our salvation for all who put their faith and trust in God.

It is from this passage from Colossians (1:12-20) that we take the final doxology we use at Mass at the end of the Eucharistic prayer. It acclaims through, with, in Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit that all glory and honor is to God the Father. This acclamation concludes with definitive clarity the Oneness of God and the divine power revealed in Jesus, now present to us in the Holy Spirit. It is not only a beautiful prayer to sing, it is also a powerful and necessary acclamation that expresses our faith in God through Christ.

Consider your faith today. You are a child of God and a person of light because of Christ Jesus. Your sins are forgiven and your eternal life secure because of the surpassing love of God given in Jesus by his Cross. At your Thanksgiving table be sure to offer thanks and praise to God who gives us life. I would be grateful for a prayer on Monday.

Father John Esper