

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Solemnity of Christ the King—Year C

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Reading 1

2 Samuel 5:1-3

In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said:
"Here we are, your bone and your flesh.
In days past, when Saul was our king,
it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back.
And the LORD said to you,
'You shall shepherd my people Israel
and shall be commander of Israel.'
When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron,
King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD,
and they anointed him king of Israel.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

R. (cf. 1) **Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**
I rejoiced because they said to me,
"We will go up to the house of the LORD."
And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
R. **Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.
R. **Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

According to the decree for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David.
R. **Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

Reading 2

Colossians 1:12-20

Brothers and sisters:

Let us give thanks to the Father,
who has made you fit to share
in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.
He delivered us from the power of darkness
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.
For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;
all things were created through him and for him.
He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that in all things he himself might be preeminent.
For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,
and through him to reconcile all things for him,
making peace by the blood of his cross
through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

Alleluia

Mark 11:9, 10

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come!

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 23:35-43

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said,
"He saved others, let him save himself
if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God."
Even the soldiers jeered at him.
As they approached to offer him wine they called out,
"If you are King of the Jews, save yourself."
Above him there was an inscription that read,
"This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying,
"Are you not the Christ?
Save yourself and us."
The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply,
"Have you no fear of God,
for you are subject to the same condemnation?
And indeed, we have been condemned justly,
for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes,
but this man has done nothing criminal."
Then he said,
"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
He replied to him,
"Amen, I say to you,
today you will be with me in Paradise."

Exegesis

2 Samuel 5:1-3

1 Samuel and *2 Samuel* chronicle events from the birth of Samuel through the Exile. The books cover the period of the Prophets and the Kings of Judah and Israel. David was born in the year 1040 B.C. in Bethlehem. "David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. He had eight sons, and in the days of Saul was old and well on in years. David was the youngest. While the three oldest had joined Saul, David would go and come from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem." (1 Sam 17: 12, 14-15).

As a young man, perhaps in his teens, David was anointed by Samuel. "Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The Lord said, 'There, anoint him, for this is he!' Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in his hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David." (1 Sam 16: 12-13).

At the age of thirty, (1010 B.C.) David was anointed as king of Judah at Hebron. "After this David inquired of the Lord. 'Shall I go up into one of the cities of Judah?' The Lord replied to him, 'Yes.' Then David asked, 'Where shall I go?' He replied, 'To Hebron.'" (2 Sam 2: 1). "Then the men of Judah came there and anointed David king of the Judahites." (2 Sam 2: 4).

Meanwhile Ishbaal, son of Saul became the king of the remainder of the tribes of Israel. "Ishbaal son of Saul, was forty years old when he became king over Israel, and he reigned for two years. The Judahites alone followed David. In all, David spent seven years and six months in Hebron as king of the Judahites." (2 Sam 2: 10-11).

During this brief period a civil war was sputtering between the Judahites and Israel, led by Saul's sons. Abner, angry at an accusation laid against him by Ishbaal, abandons supporting him. He then met with David and promised both he and the rest of Israel would now support him. (See 2 Samuel 3: 7 - 21). Joab, angered that David didn't arrest or kill Abner when he had the chance, murders Abner when he returns to Hebron. Two of King Saul's military captains, sensing Ishbaal's weakness after the death of Abner, murder him in his sleep. (See 2 Samuel 4: 1 - 7).

This brings us to our pericope. All the tribes of Israel, right after Ishbaal's death, anoint David as their king. *In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said: "Here we are, your bone and your flesh. In days past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back."* The Law required that a king be chosen from among their kin. "When you have come o the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, and have occupied it and settled in it, should you then decide to have a king over you like all the surrounding nations, you shall set that man over you as your king whom the Lord, your God, chooses. He whom you set over you as king must be your kinsman; a for-igner, who is not kin of yours, you may not set over you." (Deut 18: 14-15).

1 Chronicles details this event. "Then all Israel gathered about David in Hebron, and they said" "Surely, we are of the same bone and flesh as you. Even formerly, when Saul was still king, it was you who led Israel in all its battles. And now the Lord, your God, has said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel and be ruler over them.' Then all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and there David made a covenant with them in the presence of the Lord; and they anointed him king over Israel, in accordance with the word of the Lord as revealed through Samuel." (1 Chr 11: 1-3). It was God who chose David. "The Lord said to Samuel: '... I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen My king from among his sons.'" (1 Sam 16: 1). David was well known for his military success. "David then carried out successfully every mission on which Saul sent him. So Saul put him in charge of his soldiers, and this was agreeable to the whole army, even to Saul's own officers." (1 Sam 18: 5). "So, David led the people on their military expeditions, and prospered in all his enterprises, for the Lord was with him." (1 Sam 18: 13).

"May God do thus and so to Abner if I don not carry out for David what the Lord swore to him; that is, take away the kingdom from the house of Saul and establish the throne of David over Israel." (2 Sam 3: 9-10).

And the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel.' "Now then, speak to My servant David, 'The Lord of hosts has this to say: It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of My people Israel.'" (2 Sam 7: 8). "He chose David His servant, took him from the sheepfold. From tending sheep God brought him to shepherd Jacob, His people, Israel, His heritage. He shepherded them with a pure heart; with skilled hands he guided them." (Ps 78: 70-72).

When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD, and they anointed him king of Israel. *2 Kings* describes a similar covenant. "Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord as one party and the king and the people as the other; by which they would be the Lord's people; and another covenant, between the king and the people." (2 Kgs 11: 17).

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Psalm 122 consists of nine verses. It is titled *A Pilgrim's Prayer for Jerusalem* in the NAB and *Let Us Go to the House of the Lord* in the ESV. This beautiful song is one of rejoicing and gratitude for the peace and blessings that the Lord showers upon all who come to Him. The Lord waits and calls each of us to come to Him. So let us go up rejoicing to the house of the Lord with gratitude in our hearts.

Psalm 122 echoes many of the same themes as Psalm 48. "Great is the Lord and highly praised in the city of our God. The holy mountain, fairest of heights, the joy of all the earth. Mount Zion, the heights of Zaphon, the city of the Great King." (Ps 48: 1-3). What we have heard we now see in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God founded to last forever. O God, within Your temple we ponder Your steadfast love (*hesed*). Like Your name, O God, Your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. The cities of Judah rejoice because of Your saving deeds! (Ps 48: 9-12).

I rejoiced because they said to me, "We will go up to the house of the LORD." And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem. The Hebrew word that is translated as *LORD* in this verse and throughout this Psalm is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that is translated here as *house* is *bayit*. *Bayit* is used predominantly to describe a *dwelling house* or *household* or even a *family lineage*. *Bayit* is a word that is also used to a much lesser degree to describe a *temple* or a *palace*. As described in Psalm 48, to go up to the house of the Lord is a cause for great rejoicing. The Jewish person was required by law to go up to the temple at least three times per year. "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths." (Deut 16: 16).

Jerusalem, built as a city with compact unity. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD. "The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem, gathers the dispersed of Israel." (Ps 147: 2). So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. (Neh 4: 6).

According to the decree for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

In it are set up judgment seats, seats for the house of David. "Promote the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you; pray for it to the Lord, for upon its welfare depends on your own." (Jer 29: 7). "And many peoples shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Is 2: 3). "And many nations shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;" (Mic 4: 2-3). "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.' Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD." (Zec 8: 21-22).

Exegesis (Continued)

Colossians 1:12-20

Modern scholarship debates whether *Colossians* was written by Paul or one of his disciples. That discussion is beyond the scope of this exegesis, and for the sake of this writing I will use Paul as the author.

Colossae is a town in the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor. It is located a few miles east of Ephesus. It was known for its wool and textile industry. In fact, its name comes from a dark red dye used for wool, *colossinus*. Colossae was a gentile territory made up of Persians and Greeks with a sizable Jewish population of approximately 10,000.

There is no record of Paul ever visiting Colossae. The community there was founded by Epaphras, a native of Colossae. Philemon and the slave Onesimus also were natives of Colossae.

As is often the situation with Paul's letters, the author addresses problems that have arisen in the community. One of the struggles of the early Church that Paul seeks to address is an obvious Persian astrological influence as well as a Hellenistic impact on the theology of the community.

Our chosen pericope today bridges two sections of the letter with very specific themes. The first section focuses on an expression of gratitude for the Colossian's faith, and the second section exalts the supremacy of Christ.

Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. The encouragement to express gratitude appears several times in this short letter. "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." (Col 1: 3). "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." (Col 3: 15). The Greek word that is translated as *fit* in this verse is *hikanoo*. *Hikanoo* means to *make sufficient* or to *qualify*. Paul views this *qualification* or *fitness* as coming from the grace of divine adoption. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." (Rom 8: 16-17). "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba Father!' So, you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." (Gal 4: 4-7).

He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. The Greek word that is translated as *delivered* is *rhyomai*, which means to *rescue from* or *deliver from*. The expression *power of darkness* is *exousia skotos* in the original Greek. *Exousia* describes an authority or a power or a domain that has a source. In this expression the source is darkness (*skotos*) which is the manifestation of Satan and his minions. As He neared His Passion Jesus spoke of the *power of darkness*. "Day after day I was with you in the temple area, and you did not seize Me; but this is your hour, the time for the *power of darkness*." (Lk 22: 53). Paul articulates the *power of darkness* is his *Letter to the Ephesians*. "For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this *present darkness*, with the evil spirits of the heavens." (Eph 6: 12).

Exegesis (Continued)

Colossians 1:12-20

Christ came to deliver us from the power of darkness and open for us the Kingdom of Christ. Through our election and perseverance in faith St. Peter speaks of our entry into the Kingdom of Christ. “For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for.” (1 Pt 1: 11). St. Paul describes it as follows: “In love He destined us for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of His will, for the praise of the glory of His grace that He granted us in the beloved.” (Eph 1: 6).

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. St Paul here begins the doctrinal part of the epistle; he continues it down to 2:7. Christ is the ‘image of the invisible God’. ‘Image’ (εἰκών), says St Thomas (*op. cit.*) connotes three qualities at the same time: (a) it must have a likeness with the original prototype, (b) it must be derived from the prototype, (c) it must belong to the same species as the prototype.¹

As is often the situation with Paul’s letters, the author addresses problems that have arisen in the community. One of the struggles of the early Church that Paul seeks to address is an obvious Persian astrological influence as well as a Hellenistic impact on the theology of the community. Paul addresses this concern by reciting what is believed to be an early Christian hymn. The hymn emphasizes Christ, and His role in creation (vs 15-17) and in redemption (vs. 18-20).

For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

Christ as the preexisting Logos through whom all things came into being is emphasized by John in the prologue of his Gospel, which is also thought to be an ancient Christian hymn. “In the beginning (*arche*) was the Word (*Logos*). And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning (*arche*) with God. All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life...” (Jn 1: 1-3). Wisdom literature also spoke of the preexisting Logos of God when describing the Wisdom of God. “Wisdom, the artificer of all, taught me.” (Wis 7: 22). “God of my fathers, Lord of mercy, you who have made all things by Your Word and in Your wisdom have established man...” (Wis 9: 1-2).

He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. The Greek word that is translated as *beginning* is *arche*. This word would have been particularly poignant for the Hellenists of the community at Colossae. One of the deepest questions posited by Greek Philosophy was the necessary existence of a preexisting force that would initiate all of creation into motion or being. They called that element the *arche*, the first principle, the unmoved mover. Paul is stating clearly here as is the Beloved Disciple John in his Gospel, that Jesus is the *Arche*, He is the First Principle.

1. D. J. Leahy, “[The Epistle to the Colossians](#),” in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Bernard Orchard and Edmund F. Sutcliffe (Toronto; New York; Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 1134.

Exegesis (Continued)

Luke 23:35-43

Verse 35 begins “And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers sneered at Jesus...” (Lk 23: 35a). Luke depicts the crowd as merely watching while both Matthew and Mark depict a more negative view of the people. “Those passing by reviled Him...” (Mt 27: 39). “Those passing by reviled Him...” (Mk 15: 29). Similar to Luke, both Matthew and Mark point out that the leaders/rulers *mocked/sneered* at Jesus. Matthew adds the elders to the group of rulers. “Likewise, the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked Him.” (Mt 27: 41).

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *rulers* is *archon*. *Archon* can be translated as *ruler, leader, official, or commander*. Mark specifies that the rulers are chief priests and the scribes. “Likewise, the chief priests and the scribes, mocked Him among themselves, and said, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself’” (Mk 15: 31). Matthew adds the elders to the list of rulers. “Likewise, the chief priests with the scribes and the elders mocked Him and said...” (Mt 27: 41). The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *sneered* is *ekmykterizo*. *Ekmykterizo* means to *sneer, ridicule, or show contempt for*. Luke used this expression earlier in his Gospel when the Pharisees respond to Jesus saying, “You cannot serve both God and mammon.” (Lk 16: 13). “The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all these things and sneered (*ekmykterizo*) at Him.

The Greek word translated as *save* in this verse is *sozo*. *Sozo* is a much-used word to speak of the role of Jesus as servant and as savior. *Sozo* means to *deliver from*, such as *delivering from bondage or illness, i.e., to be made free or to be made well*. This challenge presented to Jesus reminds us of a proverb in His own words, “Physician, heal yourself.” (Lk 4: 23). Of course, Jesus has no need of healing; He came to save us. “But He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved (*sozo*) you; go in peace.’” (Lk 7: 50). (See also Lk 8:48; 17:19; and 18:42). Jesus also is called Savior, one who saves (*soter*). “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior (*Soter*), who is Christ (*Christos*) the Lord (*Kyrios*). (See also Acts 5:31; 13:23).

The Chosen One is a translation of the original Greek word *Eklektos*. The Chosen One is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah. “Here is My servant whom I uphold, My Chosen One with whom I am well pleased, upon whom I have put My Spirit; He shall bring forth justice to the nations.” (Is 42: 1). “You whom I have called My servant, whom I have chosen and will not cast off.” (Is 41: 9). “He whom the Lord then chooses is the holy one.” (Num 15: 7). This phrase echoes the voice of God at the Transfiguration. “Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is My Chosen (*Eklektos*) Son; listen to Him.’” (Lk 9: 35). “Come to Him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God.” (1 Pt 2: 4). Note the similarity with David as the chosen one of God. (See exegesis above on 2 Sam 5: 1-3).

The title *The Christ of God* is *Christos tou Theos* in the original Greek. It is the exact title that Peter attributed to Jesus in his famous confession. “‘But who do you say that I AM?’ Peter said in reply, ‘The Christ of God (*Christos tou Theos*).’” (Lk 9: 20).

Exegesis (Continued)

Luke 23:35-43

*Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews." The Greek word that is translated as jeered in this verse is *empaizo* which means to mock, ridicule or make fun of. The Greek word that is translated as wine is *oxos*. *Oxos* is used to describe poor or sour wine, or vinegar. "The Lord said to Moses: 'Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When a man (or woman) solemnly takes the Nazirite vow to dedicate himself to the Lord, he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he may neither drink wine vinegar, or other vinegar...' (Num 6: 1-3). "Instead, they put gall in my food; for my thirst they gave me vinegar (*oxos* in the LXX)." (Ps 68: 22).*

The Greek word that is translated in this verse as *inscription* is *epigraphe*. According to the Roman historian Suetonius, an *inscription* on the cross was standard protocol. (See Suetonius, *Life of Caligula* 32:2). Some early Lukan manuscripts include the Latin and Hebrew letters as well as the Greek. It is ironic that in an attempt to mock Jesus they get the inscription correct. He is the King of the Jews, chosen by the Father in the lineage of King David.

*Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." The two criminals crucified with Jesus highlight the reality of the gift of human free-will. One turned toward Jesus and one turned away. One jeered with the crowd and one sought grace and mercy. The Greek word that is translated as Paradise in this verse is *Paradeisos*. *Paradeisos* is derived from a Persian word that means garden, or orchard, or park, i.e., place of pleasure. The word is used three times in the NT. It makes its first appearance, however, in the Greek OT in Genesis 2: 8 to describe the Garden of Eden before the Fall. "Then the Lord God planted a garden (*paradeisos*) in Eden, in the east, and He placed there the man whom He had formed." (Gen 2: 8). In the NT the word appears in 2 Corinthians and Revelation. "And I know that this person was caught up into Paradise (*Paradeisos*) and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter." (2 Cor 12: 4). "Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that is in the garden of God (*Paradeisos*)." (Rev 2: 7).*

Reflection

As we have been reading from the Gospel of Luke week after week we are following Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. The focus of the Gospel of Luke is the journey to Jerusalem where Jesus will accomplish His mission as our Savior. His public journey began by entering in the Jordan River where He enters the waters of our baptism, entering into solidarity with us. He who was without sin enters into the waters of human life to raise up our fallen human nature. As Jesus nears the city, we are told that he passed through Jericho, the sin city of the ancient world. This would have shocked any Jewish person of the time. The Jews beat a path around the city, and it became a well-traveled road. Jesus passed through the city to encounter Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, the worst of the worst of sinners. In the encounter salvation came to Zacchaeus and his household. This Sunday Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem and He is hanging on a cross between two thieves. And He is counted among the wicked. He who is without sin becomes sin for us.

This weekend brings our liturgical year to a close with the great feast of *Christ the King*. Each year on this feast the image of the shepherd and the king are brought together for us in the readings. This year in cycle C of the readings it is a little more subtle. David the shepherd boy who was anointed king of Israel is the subject of our first reading. In our Gospel, Jesus the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep, is hanging on the cross and the sign above his head reads, *The King of the Jews*.

These two images contrast the lowest position of the ancient world and the most exalted position that one could attain in this life. David was a lowly shepherd boy who was raised up by God to become the great king of Israel. Jesus, the king of the universe, humbles himself to become a lowly shepherd for us. He humbles Himself to share in our humanity. Like a shepherd who lives on the open range with the sheep and takes on their odor over time, Jesus comes in solidarity with us. He is with the sheep. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

St. Paul reminds us “to have the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who though He was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, found in human appearance, He humbled Himself becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Ph 2:5-11) And so the King who became a lowly shepherd for us is once again the Lord and the King of heaven and earth. Today we hold up the cross in triumph as we strive to make him the Lord and ruler of our lives.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ the King,



Personal Witness

As I was praying and contemplating the readings for the great *Feast of Christ the King of the Universe*, our final celebration of Year C, the end of our three-year lectionary cycle, I could not help but see the contrast presented between the forces of good and evil, light and darkness, dominions of grace and dominions of death and gloom. This became particularly clear to me as I explored the readings in greater depth during my exegesis. The readings portray a time before, and time after, the Fall of humanity. When Jesus speaks of Paradise (*Paradeisos*) He is describing a place that existed before the Fall. At the moment of His death on the Cross, He is restoring once again that Garden of Eden (Gen 2: 8) to its original purity and opening the gates once again for those who love Him. From the Cross one of the thieves turned away from Jesus and one turned toward Him. Now the choice is ours to make.

As I have mentioned many times, I was blessed to grow up in a very devout Catholic home. I was immersed in an environment of faith and love. It was not just my immediate family, but extended family, parish community and neighborhood that provided a faith-filled social structure for me. All of my cousins and friends shared that same graced life. We all “danced to the drum” of the Church’s liturgical year and Her sacramental life. With bi-monthly trips to the Sacrament of Reconciliation it was hard not to be in a state of grace (At least twice a month).

Then it was off to college. Although my deep Catholic roots were always within me, I found myself in an entirely different environment. My life was now filled with the glitter of temptation and newfound freedoms pulling me in seemingly endless directions. I traveled down countless roads that led me nowhere. This listlessness continued into my career as a CPA and lasted into my late twenties. There was something missing deep within me that drew me back to the Lord.

When I finally came back to the Lord and went through a deep conversion experience, I rediscovered Jesus, who had always been there; it was I who had drifted away. In that experience I not only rediscovered the Lord, but His Mystical Body, the Church, especially in the community of believers that make up His Body. Over a relatively short period of time, my circle of friends changed, changed for the better. I discovered an incredible family of like-minded Christians who were walking the same path together with Jesus. I was transporting myself into a new environment. My desire to serve them drove me to answer the Lord’s call to the priesthood.

As a priest, I find myself encountering people from a variety of very diverse cultural and social environments. I see an incredible contrast in those environments and the effect that they have on a person’s spiritual life. Over the years I have developed particularly deep ties with daily Mass attendees. They are typically retired folks who have raised their families and find great community support from their parish family. They are surrounded and supported by many of their peers. On the other hand, I find myself often counseling young people who are immersed in much different social settings. Many are struggling with addictions, alcohol and drugs, pornography and sexual promiscuity. Many have drifted from the sacramental life of the Church. Living in a state of grace is much more difficult for them.

Just as our readings this weekend contrast the Kingdom of God from the kingdom of darkness, I see that contrast every day. The question becomes, “Where do we live our lives and who’s spirit do we allow to live in us? Do we allow the spirit of evil and darkness to influence and guide our lives? Or do we turn to the Lord and invite Him into our minds, hearts and souls? The kingdom and the dominion that we choose now will have eternal consequences. The Good News as proclaimed by our Gospel this weekend is that it is never too late to turn to Jesus. If we do, we will one day hear those words, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Fr Glenn