

Mass on Thanksgiving Day at 10:00 a.m.

- Well...today we celebrate the last Sunday of the year—the Solemnity (which is the highest type of celebration) of Christ the King
- This celebration anticipates the second coming of Christ—when, as the prophet Daniel tells us—“*All peoples, nations, and languages serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion.*”
- It is the time when God will be everything for everyone who has loved Him, followed His commandments and His moral laws, and has loved and aided his neighbor.
- A time when, as it says in Revelation: “*God himself will be with [His people]; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things [will] have passed away.*” (Rev 21:3-4)
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- In this celebration, we call Christ “the King”...using the title “king” for Him simply to have a reference point—a simplistic analogy—for our own limited intellect.
- Likewise, the church uses the title “King of the Universe”...simply referring to “all that is...all that exists”. No arguments about multiverses please! All would, of course, be included.
- But...Jesus is much, much more than that.
- God is our very Creator, and creator of all existence. We would not exist...we could not continue to exist even a moment...without Him sustaining us in this existence.
- As a dream does not exist without the dreamer, we cannot exist without being “held” in the mind of God.
- “*For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood forth*” as it says in Psalm 33:9.
- God says at Creation: “*‘Let there be light’, and there was light.*” Likewise He said: “Let there be Bob, or Shelley, or Bill, or Cydni”... and Cydni came to be.
- John’s Gospel tells us most elegantly about Jesus: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*”

*all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:1-3)*

- ...and Paul reminded us in the second reading: “...in Him were created all things in Heaven and on earth...all things were created through Him and for Him...in Him all things hold together.”
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- “...in Him all things hold together.”—an interesting phrase.
- When I read that, I always think of the atomic strong and weak forces.
- As the governor of Creation, God could eliminate those forces.
- And then...poof! We (our bodies, at least, not to mention all matter) would become almost immediately a soup of some sort of unattached particles...or perhaps even energy.
- In THIS community I can literally say “See your neighborhood nuclear physicist for more details.”
- But I think of that also when I read 2 Peter: “...the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away...and the elements will be dissolved with fire...” (2 Peter 3:10)
- But...whatever mechanism God uses is irrelevant; it will be the final judgment—the fulfillment of God’s kingdom--nonetheless...and that is what is important.
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- And yet, though we are absolutely dependent upon God for even our very existence, He loves us so dearly. One could even say...so desperately.
- God suffers on a cross as a visible, adamant and even shameless proclamation to Heaven and earth of His love for us.
- And many wonder WHY we keep a crucifix rather than just a cross!
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- We often wonder...WHY such love. **I** often wonder why such love! Why, with all my sinful rebellion, with all my infidelities, with my insults to your majesty...WHY do You still love me so much? Why do I yet still enjoy your favor as to be your child...a child of Your Church? A man redeemed by your death? A man so undeserving... offered even now...the gift of eternal life with you?

- Such realization fills me with an emotion completely beyond expressing.
- Such is the graciousness...the magnanimity...the love...of our king... not only to offer this salvation to us...but to die in agony for each of us, so that each of us might live. To pay the price for our infidelities.
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- Why did a price need be paid? Why did not God simply wave His hand and sweep all into Heaven?
- Because God is all good...and that good includes the good of justice.
- Without justice, God would be unjust, and injustice is not a good, but a deficiency of goodness.
- Our offenses against the infinitely good God and against one another demands that justice be served.
- That's where, in the infinite mercy of God, Jesus steps in...and offers Himself in payment of that infinite good—that infinite justice.
- He takes the punishment that we rightly and justly deserve upon Himself...and thus the balance...the fulfillment...of divine justice—the divine good—is satisfied.
- And that's why we must accept Christ and follow His teaching for that salvation...for if we reject Him, we reject that offer of God's mercy.
- A man on death row may be offered the governor's pardon...but he may accept or reject that pardon. If rejected, the execution proceeds.
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- God's pardon—God's love—is offered to all, but we have that free will to slap His hand away—a hand ever extended to us as long as we live, though we never know how long that will be.
- We see this in the Gospel today—the good thief on the point of death, confessing his sin and asking God's mercy...and that mercy is readily given.
- We remember the warning from the book of Sirach: *“If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice...Before a man are life and death, and whichever he chooses will be given to him.* (15:15ff)

- Through a tree death entered the world by the Original Sin, and so it was fitting that by a tree—the cross—death was abolished and life was restored to the world once again.
- The cross itself is a figure of Jesus' power and authority.
- From the center branching out in four directions, signifying the universality of Christ sacrifice...the power and providence of Him who hung upon it extending everywhere.
- The horizontal member symbolizing the equality and embrace of all men and women—Christ's brothers and sisters in His human flesh.
- ...and the vertical member representing His power and authority—His reign—extending from the Heavens to the earth and under the earth.
- Christ the King. Worldly kings demand that their subjects live and die for him; Jesus, the true king, lived and died for US.
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- Our duty as this king's subjects is to follow Him...to reflect God's love and mercy to the world. To love God above all, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. To adhere to the Church—the Teacher—He established to guide us.
- Words will not save us. Christ said: "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*" (Mat 7:21 RSV)
- We remember the letter of James: *What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?...faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.* (Jam 2:14-17)
- And Jesus Himself said "*Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*" (Mat 7:19 RSV)
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- What greater time, then, as we begin a new Advent season—a new liturgical year—to offer our devotion to our king...
- ...to kneel before Our Lord as did the knights of old...pledging to serve Him in unwavering devotion...as have so many saints—so many of our loyal brothers and sisters--before us.
- Jesus tells us: "*...seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all...things shall be yours as well.*" (Mat 6:33)
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- So...as we enter the season of Thanksgiving and begin to anticipate Christmas, I exhort you in the words of Paul: “... *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*”(Phi 4:8)
- And when the task seem too much...when the world seems to close in upon you and temptations seem to assault you on every side...look upwards and proclaim to yourself and to the world...
- “*I can do all things in [Christ] who strengthens me.*” (Phi 4:13)

## Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Lectionary: 162

Reading 12 [SM 5:1-3](#)

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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** [PS 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5](#)

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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** [COL 1:12-20](#)

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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.

## **Gospel** [LK 23:35-43](#)

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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."