

Christ the King

The Thirty Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lk 23: 35-43

Dear Friends,

The Angel said to Mary, ***“You shall name him Jesus. He will be great and called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father....And Mary said, “How can this be?” (Lk 1:31-34)***

On this feast of Christ the King we celebrate a “kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.” (Preface of Christ the King) We are asked to gaze again on the Crucified Christ and we are driven to ask again, how can this be?

We have journeyed the year with St. Luke Gospel message. We have been invited into the mystery where the last shall be first, and the first last. We have heard the strange teaching where we have to lose our life to save it. Even stranger, we were told to ***“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...to the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other as well.”*** (Lk 6:27-29)

As we ponder the mangled body of our King so many events of the Gospel journey seem like a long faded past. The miracle worker and the healer is hidden in the agony of the Cross. Peter’s boat overflowing with the great catch, the multiplication of the loaves and fishers, Bartimeaus jumping for joy with his new sight, the penitent woman rejoicing in her tears and so many other events unveiling the gracious possibilities in life. We have to ask, how is such a radical turn to darkness possible. The contradiction of the Cross goes so beyond any possible human understanding. Yet we ponder and see a crucified Savior and Messiah, a King in total poverty and apparent defeat. A leader abandoned by almost all. With good reason we need to ask, how can this be?

The mockery of the rulers, the soldiers and even the unrepentant thief holds the seed of the answer. “Save yourself.” Indeed, the message is one of salvation. But even to the very end Jesus is not about himself but the servant of others. It bursts out in the light of faith of the good thief. With the eyes of the heart is able to see a Savior and a King. ***“Today you will be with me in paradise.”*** (Lk 23:43)

Luke’s pattern of reversal, the up side down world of Jesus’ Gospel has its ultimate expression in today’s Gospel: death giving way to life! It is not only the good thief but all of us as we celebrate the victory of a loving God answering our question. The unconditional love of God revealed in Jesus Crucified and Jesus Risen tells us how this can be! Alleluia!