

Solemnity of Christ the King

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

A priest was trying to teach the *Apostle's Creed* to a young man who wished to become a Christian. After some time, the priest grew tired of teaching the young man because no matter how hard he tried, the young guy just could not study or retain the prayer in his memory. Finally, as the priest was about to give up his fruitless attempts by intending to say: "Let your faith alone save you, I can't help you anymore, sorry," the young man told the priest: "It's not easy for me to study the prayer. Is it okay if I prayed differently?" "How, and with what prayer?" asked the priest. The young man replied: "It's not really a prayer but a kind of friendly conversation with Jesus." He continued: "I say every day, whenever I can, 'Jesus loves me, and I love him' and 'Jesus is in my heart and I am in His Heart.'"

This simple story has a great message. As we celebrate the Feast of our Eternal King, with profound faith and with tremendous love and joy, let's all say: "Jesus loves me and I love him!" and "Jesus is in my heart, and I am in His Heart!" This is the spiritual assurance that we should own and have by our Christian faith.

In today's Gospel passage, one of the criminals crucified with Jesus said to him: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." The immediate reply from the King was: "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

You might have watched the astounding movie *The Passion of the Christ* by director and actor, Mel Gibson. In it, he beautifully captured every part of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross through the lens of the camera. Recalling the scene where the two crucified criminals were closely watching Jesus, where one was cursing everyone with abusive language and challenging Jesus to perform a miracle, it was clear from his taunting that he misunderstood the Messiah as being merely a magician or miracle worker. The other thief, though, recognized Jesus as the true Messiah. This 'good thief' heard the cry of Jesus on the cross, as recorded in the Gospel according to St. John: "I am Thirsty." Jesus



thirsted for souls even while undergoing heinous suffering. He even thirsted for the souls of the people who were opposed to him, and who were trying to kill him. Jesus, the King, was thirsting for souls, and the good thief picked up on this understanding and responded to the invitation of Jesus: and with the humble request from the thief, the King offered him Paradise.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus our King is telling all of us in our daily lives: “I Thirst.” The King is saying: “My dear, I thirst for you, for your love, your companionship, and for an intimate relationship with you.” The Lord has a spiritual thirst for each of us; a reciprocal longing. The King is longing for us, and we should all, likewise, long for Him in the midst of our busy lives; and in the joy and pain that we face daily. As a spiritual practice, let us strive to meditate on the persona of Jesus every day. This will help us to imitate Jesus the King more intimately.

Listen to the invitation from God the Father in St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians (1.13-14): “The Father has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” This is an invitation to the Kingdom; open to all who believe in him. The Salvation History brings the beauty of this everlasting Thirst of God. Jesus is the manifestation of the Father’s thirst for humanity. Jesus the Eternal King thirsts for all of us to be in communion.

Like the good thief, let us also, in every moment, thirst for a union with the Eternal King. With the Psalmist, let us sing: “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Psalm 42:1-2)