

## **“Who do you say that I am?” (November 25, 2018)**

Today, we begin the final week of another liturgical year. Today, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King.

But let's face it. The idea of kingship is foreign to us. We don't have kings, do we? Indeed, our nation rebelled at its founding against the very idea of kingship.

So what do we do with this idea? What do we do with this image of Christ the King?

In fact, different cultures have used different language to express a singular truth: God is God and we aren't God.

- And so the admonition in the Book of Deuteronomy: “You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength”...
- And so the expression drawn from Greek philosophy: “Jesus – the Son of God – is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of all things...”
- And so the idea of kingship, a concept associated with absolute power, a concept associated with absolute authority in the ancient and medieval worlds...

God is God and we aren't God. When we reserve portions of our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strength, we put ourselves before God. When we fail to recognize God as the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of all things, we put ourselves before God. And when we fail to recognize God as the source of all that is good, we put ourselves before God.

God wants more. God wants more from us. As we've noted time and again over the course of the last several weeks, God wants all of us.

And so the cynical phrasing of Pilate's question in today's Gospel reading from John... “So, Jesus, are you, indeed, the King of the Jews? Are you, indeed, the one to whom I, Pilate, should orient my heart, my soul, my mind, and all my strength? Are you the alpha and the omega of my existence? Are you the King of the Jews?” The derisive phrasing of Pilate's question indicates that he's already made up his mind. He's already put himself before Jesus. He's already put himself before God.

Consider, in contrast, the invitation to discipleship posed by Jesus himself. Consider, in contrast, Jesus' invitation to Peter in Mark's Gospel. “But you,” Peter, “who do you say that I am?” Peter's response? “You are the Messiah, Lord.” And in John's Gospel, Jesus goes even further. “So how about you, Peter, do you want to leave, too?” Peter's response? “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

Peter's “leap of faith” – Peter's “fundamental choice” for Jesus – is evident in these two exchanges. Peter recognizes that God is God and that he, Peter, is not God.

Is this the end of the story for Peter? No, not by a longshot... There will be many twists and turns in his long journey of discipleship. But from this point forward, Peter knows that he owes Jesus all of his heart, all of his soul, all of his mind, and all of his strength. From this point forward, Jesus is the alpha and the omega of Peter's existence. From this point forward, Jesus is, indeed, Christ the King for Peter.

Like Peter, we've been invited into a life of intentional discipleship. Like Peter, we are challenged to make a "fundamental choice" in favor of Jesus. And like Peter, we have experienced and will continue to experience ups and downs over the course of our lifetimes. Again like Peter, however, we can be assured that Jesus walks with us in every step of our journeys.

Yes, God wants more. He wants all of us. But God is patient. God walks with us. Indeed, we can be assured that Jesus is here with us now. In the word, certainly; but, in a moment, in a very intimate way, in the Eucharist, too.

So how then should we respond? How should we respond to God's invitation? In our tradition, in fact, the life of intentional discipleship is expressed in our praying, our serving, and our sharing. And hence our focus over the course of the last several weeks on our praying, serving, and sharing...

- When we make time for prayer, we open ourselves to God. God is the potter; we are the clay. We are formed in prayer. Prayer – sustained prayer – is essential in the life of the intentional disciple.
- When we share, both here at St. Mary's and in the world beyond, we do, indeed, recognize God as the source of all that is good.
- And when we serve – and when we graciously accept the service of others – we follow the example of Jesus. After all, it was the very same Jesus who washed the disciples' feet and who accepted – ever so graciously – the anointing of the anonymous woman. This, in fact, is how a community of intentional disciples lives. This, in fact, is how a community of intentional disciples lives together.

Yes, God wants more. God wants all of us. He wanted more from Peter. And he wants more from us, too. But God is patient. God invites. He never demands this, that, or the other. God invites us into a life of intentional discipleship, and he walks with us in every step of our journeys.

Over the course of the last several weeks, we've invited you into an extended reflection on your own journeys. We've invited you to reflect on your praying, your serving, and your sharing. The key question? Does God want more? Does God want more from you? Does God want more from me? Does God want more from us?

We've invited you, as well, to share any commitments you've made for the coming liturgical year. Again, no names, no identification as such, and no public sharing... Instead, the anonymous commitments of intentional disciples in the midst of their journeys to God...

If you've completed one of these reflection aids, please drop it in the collection basket. We'll then gather our commitments for the coming year so that they can be brought to the altar with the bread and wine, the bread and wine that represent all that we are, all of our hopes and dreams and

all of our challenges and struggles, too. We'll bring all that we are to the altar so that all of it – all of our hopes and dreams and, yes, all of our challenges and struggles, too – can be mingled with the very body and blood of Jesus.

This, in fact, is where we accept the invitation into a life of intentional discipleship and all that this entails. This is where we truly live out of grateful hearts, the Eucharist, our true thanks giving. This, indeed, is the source and summit of our faith. This is where we say “yes.” And this is where our “yes” is sanctified and made holy.