

November 22, 2009

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King and begin the last week of this liturgical year. Next Sunday we will begin a new Church year as we light the first candle on our Advent wreaths.

On Sunday afternoon, we will gather in prayer with persons from parishes throughout the diocese who will present themselves as candidates for reception into the fullness of the Catholic Church. Some were baptized in another Christian church. Others were baptized as Catholics but did not have the opportunity for catechetical formation or for the reception of the other sacraments.

The Feast of Christ the King is a perfect background for me to discuss with those desiring to be received into the Catholic Church the most important aspect of being Catholic. Our Catholic faith is more than and different from a moral code. It is more than and different from a series of requirements and laws.

Our Catholic faith is first and foremost a “yes” to God, to a God who loves us and leads us, who always remains with us and yet allows us freedom. Our faith is a “yes” to God who is Love and who reveals His love through Jesus Christ. Jesus, the eternal Word made flesh, lived and died that we might know how deeply the Father loves us. Jesus is the way to the heart of the Father. Did not Jesus say at the Last Supper: “The one who knows me, knows the Father, for the Father and I are one”?

Jesus invites us into a relationship with Himself that lasts through life and death. For Catholics, nothing is more important than growing in the relationship to which Jesus invites us. As the motto of Andrean High School suggests, Jesus is more than a King. He is our Teacher. He teaches us how to express our love

for the Father. He teaches us the critical importance of sharing God's love with our neighbor.

As human beings, we need to express what is in our hearts. Jesus, who thirsts for our love, wishes us to express to Him daily in our prayers how much He means to us and how much we love Him.

St. Paul often spoke of his love for Jesus and what Jesus meant to him in his letters to his converts. He would often use words like this: "For me life means Christ." Or, again, "I live now not I but Christ lives in me."

A reporter once asked Blessed Mother Teresa: "Mother, what place do you give to Jesus in your life?" She immediately replied, "I give Him all of my life." She added: "To me – Jesus is my God; Jesus is my spouse; Jesus is my life; Jesus is my only love; Jesus is my all; Jesus is my everything."

If Jesus is to be the most important person in our life, if we hold Him as Lord and King in our hearts, we need to express every day what is in our heart in our prayers to Him. For that reason, the Church urges us to practice habitual personal prayer each day in the morning, at meals, in the evening, in personal reflection upon the Sacred Scriptures, and in quiet time listening to Jesus speaking to our heart.

It is for no slight reason that the Church places the obligation on every Catholic to participate at Holy Mass each weekend. When we gather for Mass with our fellow believers, we experience the presence and power of Jesus in the community gathered. When we come together for Mass, we experience the Lord speaking to us words of comfort and words of challenge and direction as the Sacred Scriptures are proclaimed. When we gather for Holy Mass, we are encouraged to offer our joys and sorrows, our tears and laughter, our crosses and challenges, all the little and big experiences of our week, together with Jesus to

the Father in the Eucharistic Prayer. Finally, at Holy Mass, the Father gives us the gift of His only Son, Jesus, in Holy Communion.

Our intimate union with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist enables us to see the face of Christ in other people, especially those in need. It is our union with Christ in the Holy Eucharist which empowers us to overcome selfishness and sin and be the hands and face and heart of Christ to others.

This Feast of Christ the King encourages us to reflect upon the priority we place for ourselves in growing in our relationship with Jesus, our Lord, our Savior, our King. May we be able to speak with ever deeper conviction the words of St. Paul: “For me life means Christ. Truly, Christ lives in me.”