

November 23, 2008

This Sunday, the Feast of Christ the King, begins the last week of the Church year.

One day Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They responded, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Jesus then addressed His real concern, “And you, who do you say I am?” It matters deeply to Jesus who we consider Him to be and how we hold Him in our heart.

In the Creed, which we profess together each Sunday at Mass, we acknowledge before one another: “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made.” We then continue to profess that Jesus became man for us and for our salvation. Indeed, Jesus emptied Himself and became like us in all things but sin. Jesus humbled Himself obediently accepting even death, death on the cross!

St. Paul, in his Letter to the Philippians, says: “Because of this, God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every other name, so that at Jesus’ name every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:9-11).

Jesus is truly Lord and King, but not like worldly kings. He cares deeply for each one of us. He was born, suffered, died, and rose in order that we might know how deeply God loves us and in order that we might share in the very life and love of God.

Jesus promised that He would never leave us alone. He is not aloof from us. He remains with us always through His Holy Spirit, in His Word proclaimed in the liturgy, and in and through the sacraments. He is most especially with us in the Blessed Sacrament and we receive Him at every Mass in Holy Communion.

In the Gospel which is proclaimed this Sunday, Jesus tells us that He is also present to us in those who are hungry, thirsty, rejected, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Jesus assures us that His heart goes out to all of those who come to their aid.

So closely does Jesus identify Himself with the poor and the needy that those who help them help Him. “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). Jesus promises to crown such compassionate persons with God’s eternal blessing.

By contrast, Jesus cuts off those who are unloving and who lack compassion from eternal blessedness. “Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me. And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Mt 25:45-46).

Jesus very strongly desires a personal relationship with each one of us. He desires that we profess Him as Lord, hold Him in our hearts, and share His life and love with others.

Jesus truly is our Lord and King, the one to whom all power in heaven and on earth has been given (Mt 28:18). He is our Savior who suffered for and with His subjects and now desires to raise us with Him to glory. If we live with Him, we shall die with Him. If we die to self and sin with Him, we shall reign with Him. We live with Jesus in a very practical way by the way we treat those who suffer and are in need.