

## From The Pastor

The Christian year begins with the birth of the human Jesus, and culminates in the Easter feast of his death and Resurrection. The Church year concludes with today's Feast of Christ the King. This feast honors the authority and Lordship in Jesus as the Son of God that we might find peace and meaningful purpose in our lives. A mature and active faith in Jesus as Lord, when he is an essential and active part of a persons' life focus, gives a person the depth and self-identity to live a life of service in love.

This kind of meaningful purpose and deep self-identity in something larger than myself is an essential cry in many people today. Those not grounded in faith with a vision of life that includes a purpose beyond their own needs and wants, is a person lost and at risk to compulsive self-need and loneliness. To come to know Christ as God's gift of love and redemption is our inner identity to live the truth that is love. The essential truth of the Christian life is relationship. God is a relationship of persons expressed in three ways of being: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Everything about God screams relationship. God shares the unity of divine love with the world through the Incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus. Jesus, fully human and fully divine dies on the Cross to reconcile us to the Father through the forgiveness of our sins. The divine life is ours now in the power of the Holy Spirit that calls us to live fulfilling lives noticeably marked by love.

With this core truth of the love of God, the reconciliation of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can, despite the trials and tragedies of life, persist with hope and courage. Without this core trust in the experience of divine love in Christ, we are at high risk to live with despair, cynicism, or compulsive selfishness. How is one to bear the weight of personal sin, the social injustice of the world, and personal evil without the hope that our lives are healed in mercy of the One who has created us purely out of selfless love. The Kingship of Jesus, the authority of his Lordship comes from the unlimited, freely given self-surrender of the divine for the sake of all God has made.

It is good to remember that the Incarnation of God in Christ is not an after thought once Adam and Eve ate the apple. Jesus, the Incarnate One preexisted in God prior to creation. He, Jesus, the Word Made Flesh, was, is, and will forever be the guarantee of God's creation. We are created to share the unitive life of God through the Son, in the love of the Spirit. With that stance of faith, our lives are of inestimable value. We exist to be loved by God, and to reveal the love of God through our love for one another. Is this not the meaningful and joyful purpose of our lives? Indeed, but it is no promise that life will be without its trials and failures.

The acceptance and trust in this truth of our faith is the essential purpose of the Feast of Christ the King. Originating in 1925 in the context of WWI, Pope Pius the XI called for this feast so that the People of God could find their footing in a world torn by war. Pope Pius writes that the feast "signals the benefits of true liberty, calm order, harmony, and peace. For these results, it is necessary that the royal dignity of Our Lord be recognized and accepted as widely as possible".

The Lordship of Jesus, accomplished and realized through his willing surrender to death on the Cross and his glorious Resurrection, breaks the power of evil and makes all things new (opening prayer at Mass). The Lordship of Jesus secures us in hope despite the evil, and fear, trials and difficulties that seem to constantly surround us. This is our hope and the meaningful purpose of our lives in Christ.

The gospel is an image of the core of our belief: to love God and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Those who serve the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned stranger are the ones who live from the heart of God unaware. Their response: 'when did we see you hungry, thirsty... and serve your needs'? Those who serve, do so freely and spontaneously out of their inner identity of love. They do not stop to think and analyze the cost or inconvenience. To do so would be to lose the true purpose, and probably result in not acting at all. In loving their neighbor, they are in fact, loving themselves by putting into action their identity in God who is love. My neighbor is a reflection of myself, each of us an image of God.

Those who fail to serve the needs of others are similarly unaware of their neglect. They say, 'we are not guilty, for we never saw you in need'. The reply is the same: 'as long as you neglected to do it for one of my little ones, you neglected to do it for me'. These go off to eternal punishment. This punishment is not God's heavy hand of pain and damnation. It is the choice and result of those who choose to live separated from love for the comfort of their own making. We can indeed make ourselves happy, but not all by ourselves. Any meaningful happiness is in relationship with others built on service in love.

The foundation of our lives is grounded in the truth of divine love revealed and freely given to us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the Lord; He is the King who gives meaningful and joyful purpose to our lives. Rejoice in Him.

Father John Esper