

CHRIST the KING – Sunday November 23, 2025

We celebrate the great Solemnity of Christ the King, which marks the end of our liturgical year, and we prepare this week to embark on the beginning of another next Sunday.

The Church places before us a Gospel that helps us see not only *who Jesus is*, but *who we are* in relationship to Him. And our Gospel brings us to Calvary... to the Cross...

To that moment when Jesus' kingship was revealed in the most unexpected, humble, and merciful of ways.

From this weekend to next, we have what we might call our own "Catholic New Year."

Next Sunday, with the First Sunday of Advent, we begin again. And because of that, this weekend is a perfect time for us to make our own spiritual "New Year's resolutions."

For those of us who have made or do make New Year's resolutions: we make promises to ourselves, we try to set goals, we hope to change. But often we become discouraged. We start strong and slowly fade. We lose motivation. We get frustrated with ourselves. We say things like: *Why bother? What's the point? I never follow through anyway.* And sometimes we bring that same discouragement into our spiritual lives. We feel like we keep failing as Christians. We try and try but don't seem to "get it right."

Some of us might even wonder whether it's better not to try too hard at all—to keep our expectations low so we don't disappoint ourselves or God.

We may even settle for a minimalistic version of the faith:

“As long as I’m a decent person, that’s good enough.” But, friends, there is nothing sadder for a Christian than to give up. Nothing good comes from letting discouragement have the last word.

And that is exactly why the Church gives us today’s Gospel—**the encounter between Jesus and the Repentant Thief**—right at the end of our liturgical year. Because Christ the King wants us to end our year with a sense of hope. This man—traditionally called *Dismas*, the Good Thief—lived an imperfect and broken life. His own admission tells us that he was “justly condemned.” His life choices brought him to a cross. And yet... it was **this man**, not the apostles, or the scholars of the law, or the most devout, **who became the first person in Scripture to receive the promise of Heaven directly from Jesus’ lips.**

And **what did he do**? He didn’t offer a long confession, or a formal prayer, or a theological treatise. He simply turned to Jesus with a humble, sincere, honest, pure and contrite heart and said: **“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”** This is one of the most beautiful confessions of faith we have. It is simple and honest. It comes from a heart and a person who knows that he cannot save himself. And Jesus—our King—responds instantly, without hesitation, without conditions: **“Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”**

This is what Christian hope is all about – this moral of THIS story is not:

- Live for today and worry about salvation tomorrow
- It is not a message of: it doesn’t matter what kind of life you live

Christian hope is that God delivers on every one of His Promises – that He is our Saviour and Redeemer. He came into the world, called us to lives of faith and His hope and desire is that we live by it. That He is King and His Kingdom isn't a place for the privileged or powerful or the best of the best, but a place for people who ask for His love and mercy with humility and sincerity.

God's greatest desire for us is faith, trust and openness – not perfection. His desire for us is not that we earn His love... but that we receive it. His priority is not our flawless performance... but our willingness to let Him in.

Many of us feel far from God and far from Heaven. Many of us wonder whether we're worthy—whether God is disappointed in us or tired of us.

The Good Thief shows us that the Kingdom opens when we simply turn to Jesus—even from the darkest places, even from a cross of our own making.

This encounter also calls us to look honestly at the year just passed. If you're anything like me, you've probably made many mistakes this year. Perhaps more than you'd like to admit. But failure is only a bad thing if we learn nothing from it – if we use it as an excuse to give up. The Christian life is modelled on Christ Himself: when we fall, we get up. When we stumble, we keep going. We never give up, because Jesus never gave up, He never gave up on us.

As we prepare to begin a new liturgical year next weekend, the Church invites us to set spiritual resolutions—real ones—rooted in hope, not in self-reliance. Resolutions that flow from the truth revealed on Calvary: **that Christ is King because**

He is the King of Mercy. His throne is the Cross and His crown is made of thorns. And His greatest victory is to save a soul that simply turns to Him.

What might this mean for us? What might we consider doing differently as we enter Advent? Maybe it's to be more intentional in the time we give to God – our prayer time. Five good minutes adding to it once in a while can make a world of difference. Maybe it's considering ways we can become less indifferent to others, working on patience, kindness or compassion, especially when it's hard! Maybe it's to intentionally live a deeper sacramental life. To come to the Eucharist with renewed desire. Or consider returning to **Confession** this Advent. The same mercy offered on the Cross is offered in the confessional. Jesus saying, "Today, you will be with me..." Or maybe it's to look for ways to resist selfishness and self-centeredness. Acts of service, small sacrifices, being other-focused—these shape us into people of the Kingdom.

Friends, none of us are without hope or disqualified. None of us are too far gone.

So, as we stand at the threshold of another liturgical year, let's pray for the grace to begin again. And maybe we start with: **"Jesus, remember me..."** And trust that Jesus our Lord and King will always answer.