

HOMILY CHRIST THE KING YRC 2019

There was a mother whose daughter ran away from home and fell into a life of prostitution and drug addiction. For a long time no one even knew where she was. Eventually her daughter returned home, repented and returned to Church. Someone asked her mother what she did to bring her daughter back. She said: “I prayed day and night, and I never went to bed at night without leaving my front door unlocked. I thought if my daughter came back at night when I was in bed, I never wanted her to say that she came to her mother’s home and couldn’t get in.” That mother put her own life in danger by leaving the front door unlocked at night to make sure that her daughter felt welcome if she returned home. That is how parents love their children. I see it here at St. Edith all of the time. What parents will sacrifice for their children.

That is the love that Jesus has for us. We hear in the Gospel reading how he demonstrated that great love for us as he hung on the cross between two criminals. The criminals hanging on both sides of him deserved their punishment, but Jesus had done nothing wrong. One thief recognized Jesus as King of the Universe and the other did not. Jesus did not look much like a King hanging on the cross. The criminal that did not recognize Jesus asked Jesus to save him from his situation on the cross. He did not ask to be saved from his sin. The criminal who recognized Jesus as King of the Universe was saved not because he deserved it, but because he turned to Jesus, because he recognized who he was. He was spiritually transformed and open to Jesus, and he recognized who he was. And Jesus response was: “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Jesus forgave him immediately when he came to him, just like the mother forgave her daughter even before she returned home. With Jesus the door is always open, but we have to choose him, just like that young girl had to choose to return to her mother to be saved. The criminal that recognized Jesus knew that his Kingdom was not of this world. He was asking for Jesus to save him in the next world. Jesus came into the world in human form to save us, and one of those criminals was surely saved that day.

Today is the feast of Christ the King. Does Jesus reign in your life as King today? Sometimes we ask Jesus the same question that the criminal who did not recognize Jesus asked him. That criminal asked: “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.” In other words if you are the Christ get us both off the cross. Change our situation right now. Sometimes we say: “Jesus if you are God, save my marriage, heal my child,

take away my pain. Get me off of this cross. Change my situation now.” Our faith tells us that our Kingdom is not of this world. Our Kingdom is with Jesus. And we do have to work through pain and suffering in this world. We do not always understand why, but God is always with us caring for us in ways that we will better understand when we enter his Kingdom.

A couple of things used to bother me about the crucifixion. Why did Jesus have to die in such a brutal way for our salvation? Well, he didn't. We could have recognized him as God. We could have embraced him, embraced his teaching and preaching and reformed our lives, but we did not do that. God created our free will and he allows us to exercise it even when it hurts him. Jesus wants us to choose him. Jesus could have went and hid out with a small group of disciples instead of going to Jerusalem. If he had done that we probably would not be sitting here today. The only other choice was to make that trip to Jerusalem and be brutally murdered for our salvation and then be raised from the dead. Because of that many people changed their lives over the centuries. Because of that we are here today. Jesus died on the cross because that is what he needed to do to get through to us. And Jesus did so willingly because he loves us that much.

I have also struggled over what type of blood thirsty God would require his son to be brutally tortured and killed for our sins. That would not have been his first choice, but we forced his hand when we exercised our free will. We did not choose Jesus. God allows us to exercise our free will even when it hurts him. Since God knows everything, he knew in advance that is the only thing that would save us. And because he loved us so much, he sent his son.

Do you want Jesus to reign in your life as King today? Know that we have to work through the struggles and pain in this world today having faith that Jesus loves us and will care for us. The reason for the suffering is not always clear, but the reasons will be in the Kingdom of God. Know that Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world and neither is ours.