

Homily Christ the King Year A 2020

We close the liturgical year at its apex, in the presence of Christ our King. Yet this Sunday brings us rapidly down to earth. We should call it "***Nitty-Gritty Sunday***". After all the theological debates and discussions, all the spiritual writings, the real question we face in the presence of our King is ***How have you lived your life?*** The response is not about achievements, nor fidelity in prayer or worship; not about penances done or retreats made, not even about austerity of life as an offering to God. The question is and always has been: how have you treated the poor and the vulnerable; that is the materially poor, those excluded or pushed to the fringes of society, those in the world without food or water and clothing – the *nitty-gritty* of life. Despite the cruelty and suffering caused by the Pandemic, it has caused everyone to make greater efforts to reach out to those in need, the elderly especially, but also the homeless and those unable to feed themselves. It has also taught us the preciousness of the world and our local environment. Economically many have been forced to live more simply and have learnt not to waste electricity and water, to use cars less frequently, not only because it helps economically but because it supports the nurturing of a healthier world and making it better for those areas of the world suffering from drought and famine.

Famous paintings are sold for what can be millions of pounds. The painting itself is unique but the painter isn't present. Our readings paint Jesus as a shepherd which he emulates and this picture of him is priceless. But Jesus is not the painting.

Like all paintings, however, it reveals much about who Jesus was: caring, protective, loving, nurturing, full of goodness and mercy, compassionate, who goes out of his way to help us. In fact, he is the kind of King in whose presence we feel comfortable, safe and secure. We feel both valued and affirmed. We feel that this is exactly the place we had always wanted to be. No wonder we love Jesus so much!! Now listen to Malcolm Guite who says:

Our King is calling from the hungry furrows
whilst we are cruising through the aisles of plenty,
our hoardings screen us from the man of sorrows,
our soundtracks drown his murmur: 'I am thirsty'.
He stands in line to sign in as a stranger
and seek a welcome from the world he made,
we see him only as a threat, a danger,
he asks for clothes, we strip-search him instead.
And if he should fall sick, then we take care
that he does not infect our private health,
we lock him in the prisons of our fear
lest he unlock the prison of our wealth.
But still on this day we shall stand and sing
the praises of our hidden Lord and King.

There was a king living in a straw thatch style palace whose hobby was collecting thrones... Whenever a carpenter created a new ornate chair, he had to have it for his collection. The King was wild about them.

One day, lightning strikes during a thunderstorm and his palace burns down including his entire collection. He was crushed, never the same again.

It is true what they say: **People in grass houses shouldn't stow thrones.**