

The Thirty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time
The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 93; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18: 33b-37

This is the 3rd and final homily in a series on a vision for Faith Formation.

Why was Jesus handed over to Pontius Pilate?

Jesus himself gives the reason, “*My kingdom does not belong to this world*”.

What does Jesus mean, “*My kingdom does not belong to this world*”? Jesus’ use of words is often supple and flexible. They move about in their meanings and never fully settle down leaving room for interpretations and multiple understandings.

Jesus was arrested and crucified not only for what he preached but more significantly for how he lived his life and the people he associated himself with: traitorous tax collectors, publicly known sinners, the sick [sickness being equated with sinfulness], Pharisees, scribes and Roman centurions, women, and heretical Samaritans. His lifestyle was that of a person fully living out the kingdom of God as envisioned by the Hebrew prophets.

I’ve spoken to you about Faith Formation primarily in terms of lifestyle and prayer.

Understanding this, some of you will ask, what about doctrine? And you would be correct in asking that.

As I have defined this new vision we call ***Bite Size Catholic Living***, it is a Christian **life style** rooted in **prayer** that expresses our **beliefs**. There is a saying in our Christian tradition that “*the law of prayer* [that is, the way we pray, our sacred texts and rituals] *is the expression of what we believe acting as the foundation for what we live*”. In other words, if you want to know what the Catholic Christian believes, watch our public rituals and actions and listen to our sacred writings and prayers.

Consider the action of *gathering* for the Sunday Eucharist. I remember standing outside of a parish church as people were driving up. It finally dawned on me, I was watching the Body of Christ come together. This action expresses our belief and commitment to God and each other.

We could all be doing something else right now but we choose to gather in this sacred place with other Christians. Gathering is an essential aspect of being Christian. The Eucharist cannot be celebrated in any solitary fashion.

In a human and bodily manner we express our belief that Christ is present by and in our gathering. Do you want to see Christ? Look around! We are the Body of Christ. We sit around the altar-table and can see each other: each a presence of Christ. Under the presidency of the priest, the living Christ, head and body is present. Together we are making real that rich image of the body that Saint Paul gave us in his letter to the Corinthian Church. Televising and livestreaming the liturgy cannot accomplish this.

Observing this act of gathering reveals how the liturgy teaches more clearly than any book or classroom experience.

Consider what is being taught in regard to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary? Listen to our prayers. They express what we believe. We pray that day,

*Almighty ever-living God,
who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of your Son,
body and soul into heavenly glory, grant...that ...we may be sharers of her glory.*

This prayer teaches us that the Assumption of the Virgin is an act of God. God took up, *assumed*, Mary into heaven. Mary she is the sign and hope for the entire Church to be assumed body and soul into heaven. Thus our prayers teach us of the goodness of the human body which will be fully redeemed, transformed and taken up into glory with Christ.

This teaching embedded in the prayers of the Solemnity of the Assumption has implications for our contemporary issues such as human trafficking, physical abuse, slavery, torture, poverty, and hunger and our burial rites. The feast teaches us we are incarnate spirits – body and spirit co-mingled as one. And that this act of God is our hope and comfort.

Why do we process with, incense and kiss the Gospel Book? This book in itself is not important but it contains what we believe is the living Word of Christ. The readings proclaimed from it feed our souls and so we reverence the book.

We bless ourselves with water when we enter our churches. What are the accompanying words? *“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*. Baptism, the Saving and Life-Giving Cross and the Holy Trinity are expressed in that simple gesture coupled with believing words that teach us over and over again.

The Sacred Liturgy is the true classroom setting and the prime teacher of doctrine. Actions and texts combine. Meaning proceeds. Faith and trust in God deepen.

We learn and express our faith by our presence; by participating in the liturgical actions; by singing the hymns, psalms and canticles and spoken responses; and by intently listening to the Word of God in the readings. In other words, by immersing ourselves in our sacred texts, prayers, silences, and ritual actions the Sacred Liturgy teaches, informs and expresses what we believe as Catholic Christians. It is here that we rehearse how to live the prophetic kingdom of God, the lifestyle that was the cause of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Supplemental to the Sacred Liturgy are the Sacramental Rites and other times that we gather to express our devotion to the Virgin and Saints, to ask and receive forgiveness, fasting to make room for God and acknowledge our neediness, and keep Vigil as we do at the Wakes of our dead or in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

In addition to these gatherings, Catholic magazines, spiritual reading, the series of “Little Blue, Black and White Books”, articles and YouTube videos on the website, the Creeds, Bible Studies, and parish presentations such as *Lent for Real Life* series and *Plaza Talks*, teachings of the bishops and councils, all assist in our learning the doctrines of our Catholic Faith.

Finally, always ask questions about the faith if you need more understanding or deeper insights.

All parents, guardians and the entire community need to do, is *“connect the dots”*.

Connect your kitchen table to our Altar – Table
and let our Altar – Table lead you back to your kitchen table.

Connect your family gatherings to our Sunday gathering
and let our Sunday gathering for Eucharist lead you back into your family gathering.

Connect every “*thank you*” and “*I’m sorry*” in your family to the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation and let the Sacraments deepen your family relationships.

Connect your care for each other with care for the poor and less fortunate.

See your family stories with all their ups and downs as part of the greater story of salvation in the Sacred Scriptures and let the Bible stories nourish your family life as you share them in pray.

Do you want to know what we Catholics believe?

Watch our ritual actions.

Listen to our prayers.

Observe how we live.

Where home, family, parish, Eucharist, love of neighbor, Sacraments, world Church, spiritual readings and the lives of the saints come together you will find yourself being formed into Jesus Christ. This is a vibrant vision of Faith Formation leading to a fully lived Christian Life.

And it all happens daily...***Bite Size***.