

SUNDAY PLUS

Christ the King of hearts

Save yourself – and us

by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

We come to the last Sunday of the liturgical year; next week we begin the season of Advent. Today's Gospel sees Jesus being mocked by the religious leaders: "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself." The irony of the scene is that the titles which are pronounced in mockery are true: Jesus as king does hang on his cross between two unlikely attendants. But the challenge which has led him to this place is not the challenge to save himself;

the challenge which has haunted and driven him throughout his ministry is the one which he answers fully: if he is who he claims to be, can he save others?

One of the criminals on either side of Jesus adds his own voice to the chorus of jeers and then challenges Jesus to save himself "and us!" A man from whom Jesus might have expected a measure of sympathy in their shared fate turns instead to ridicule. The second criminal joins Pilate and Herod in acknowledging that Jesus is innocent, but he goes further. He goes on to address Jesus by name – the only person to do so in the Gospels – and asks Jesus



Biblical figures representation of the Sanhedrin trial of Jesus at the Caiaphas tribunal. Luca Lorenzelli / Shutterstock.com

to remember him when he comes into his kingdom.

It is a criminal that recognises that Jesus has a kingdom – an acknowledgement that Jesus is king. Jesus' words to the criminal are the last words he speaks to any person during his life on earth. Appropriately they are addressed

to an outcast. Appropriately they offer salvation as a present reality. No matter what people have done in the past, there is a place for those who eventually find fellowship with Jesus. Jesus calls that place Paradise.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications: www.rpbooks.co.uk

From a cross to a crown

by Catherine Pepinster

From the moment Jesus was born, his mission was misunderstood. Herod feared the child in Bethlehem as a rival to his own kingship. Pilate asked him: "Are you the king of the Jews?" At Jesus' crucifixion, a sign is hung over him: This is the King of the Jews. On this feast day, we do not celebrate an

ordinary kingship involving wealth, or force, or earthly powers. This is a kingdom where the first will be last, and the last first; that turns the values of the material world upside down. The one who wears a crown, not of gold but of thorns, offers, says Paul to the Colossians, something greater than the riches a king like Herod has known. He offers redemption, the forgiveness of sins and a way from darkness to light. This is the servant king, prepared to live and die for his people.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom – the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

"At the end of our life we will be judged on love, that is, on our concrete commitment to love and serve Jesus in our littlest and neediest brothers and sisters. That mendicant, that needy person who reaches out his hand is Jesus; that sick person whom I must visit is Jesus; that inmate is Jesus, that hungry person is Jesus."

Pope Francis

Bittersweet


by Claire Wright

Sometimes, the idea that Jesus can be both an almighty king and an intimate friend is more than my head can understand. This Creator, "in [whom] all things hold together", also endured the most excruciating pain for me. This truth is one I hold close to my heart, and causes it to swell with joy and to break. For it is bittersweet to realise that it took his dying for us to recognise him for who he was, is, and always will be: king.

Every one of us endures joy and pain in this life. We walk through this world together, sharing the happiest of moments and the deepest of sorrows. But sometimes we are so lost in our own pain that

we forget to share others'; to empathise and to support. We can belittle the feelings of the young, dismiss those of the old. But Jesus, he is the king of hearts. He knows our joys, our sorrows and everything in-between. He doesn't judge or condemn us; is never bored with or by us; never sees us as a burden. He opens his hands and holds our hearts, giving us comfort and healing where and when we need it.

Claire Wright is a Brighton-based freelance writer who runs a faith blog and a healthy family food website, all while taking care of two lively toddlers.

Lord of my life,
be the Lord of my
love. Be the king
and centre of my
heart  Amen.

Today:
2 Samuel 5:1-3
Colossians 1:12-20
Luke 23:35-43

Monday:
Daniel 1:1-6, 8-20
Luke 21:1-4

Tuesday:
Daniel 2:31-45
Luke 21:5-11

Wednesday:
Daniel 5:1-6, 13-14, 16-17, 23-28
Luke 21:12-19

Thursday:
Daniel 6:12-28
Luke 21:20-28

Friday:
Daniel 7:2-14
Luke 21:29-33

Saturday:
St Andrew, Apostle
Romans 10:9-18
Matthew 4:18-22

Saturday (S): St Andrew (Solemnity)
Wisdom 3:1-9
Romans 10:9-18
Matthew 4:18-22

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44

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