

Church of the Good Shepherd  
and  
St. John the Evangelist

**25 Pentecost**  
**November 21, 2004**  
**FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING**  
**Fr. Bill McGinty**

**“Camelot!”**

Today is the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pentecost. It is the last Sunday in the Church’s calendar year, and it is the Feast of Christ the King.

Jesus is the King of All Christians. Today’s feast celebrates the Risen Christ in all his majesty. It depicts Jesus, the Lord, as the supreme King and authority over all the Universe, and to him shall all knees bow and all voices proclaim his glory. As much as today’s feast is the feast of all of us it is in a special way a day of celebration for our Daughters of the King. For it is under this title that they have chosen, as an order, to serve Jesus and the Gospel and dedicate their lives to building up his Kingdom.

In the movie, “First Knight,” Sean Connery plays the role of King Arthur, King of the Britons and ruler of the Kingdom of Camelot. Never in the history of the movie industry has one film stolen so many lines from the Gospels, the Bible and the mouth of Jesus. At one stage Arthur tells the young Lancelot; “Here in Camelot, we are involved in a unique experiment, where everyone is equal and respect the Rights and Freedom of all others under the law. Here, there is not room for tyrants, but this is a place where fear is vanquished and a place where families can grow in one another’s love.

The title: “Christ the King”, celebrates Jesus as the facilitator, who makes it possible for us to dream dreams that are attainable, and to see visions of the future that are possible. Jesus bridges the gap between our materialistic needs and a Kingdom of the Spirit that far surpasses our imagination. For we are certain in the knowledge, that this world will pass away, and disappear into dust and destruction. Jesus offers a new kind of Kingdom. He holds out an invitation to belong to this Kingdom just as Arthur did to Lancelot.

Arthur said: “Lancelot you are a very strange young man, I don’t think I have ever met someone so brilliant, so courageous or so stupid. And yet I sense in you something good. You should use that ability that you have for the common good. Come, join us Lancelot, become a Knight of the Round table, find your place here in Camelot where you can belong and where you can fulfill your destiny.”

There is a sense in which, the Kingdom Jesus holds out to each one of us, is no less challenging, and no less courageous or meaningful.

Like Arthur, Jesus is requesting commitment. That we pledge our allegiance to him and fight the fight that he fights, love the values he loves, work for the people he would save. For in this Kingdom of God there is work to be done and battles to be won.

Faced with his arch enemy who is threatening him with war, Arthur replies:” there is a peace to be found on the other side of war, and if need be, I will fight it.”

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Down the centuries, the Christians struggle has often been described as a war between good and evil. In the last 30 years churchmen and theologians have shied away from that kind of description. Does that mean that evil has gone away? Are there no longer evil forces at work in the universe? Have greed, selfishness, hate and horror faded? Do they no longer exist? I think not. We beat Communism because we were not afraid to say: "Communism is an evil empire." To say with John Kennedy, Ich ben Ain Berliner. To say with Winston Churchill: "The price of peace is eternal vigilance."

Today, Jesus in proclaiming his Kingdom of love, forgiveness, compassion and brotherhood and sisterhood is saying to us: "there is a fight that needs to be fought."

It is a fight for the have nots, the poor, the destitute, the mentally ill and the marginalized of our society. There is a battle raging to respect life, all life. As Chris Cooper says in the movie "Seabiscuit," "you do not throw a life away because it is broken or a little banged up." And he was talking about a horse. How much more so when we are talking about human beings, the stuff of the Kingdom of God, the limbs of the Body of Christ, the ones Jesus the King came to save. And yet with a stroke of a pen, we would stand by while men terminate a child in a partial birth abortion, watch as a young black man is executed for a crime no white man would die for, or fail the thousands of women who fall victims to spousal abuse in this country every year.

There are fights to be fought and then there are fights worth fighting. In his life Jesus did not shrink from the difficult issues or the moments of conflict or confrontation that presented were to him. He stood up in the Synagogue and spoke the words of Isaiah making them his own: "The lame shall walk, the blind shall see, and those in despair shall hope again." "I have come," says Jesus, "that you may have life and have it eternally."

The banner that Jesus calls us to today, the fight that he rallies us to, is that of life. All life. For if we do not stand up for those who are marginalized what quality of life can they expect? Why be identified by the term single mother, or one parent family when you are as human as anyone else and you just happen to be a mother with a child. What's wrong with being called Christian, American, and human being like everyone else? And if you are gay, you are gay. You are not a different species. A new discovery, or an alternate lifestyle, you are Christian, American, cherished person, disciple, intrical part of the Body of Christ. That is one of the things we can celebrate next week. That here in this place everyone finds a home. And if you are in prison, or newly released from prison, do you not deserve the same forgiveness? The same compassion and the same second chance as Jesus extended to the people in his life? Our Big Red doors must be a symbol of welcome to all, as well as a symbol that we are people who live and dwell in the Spirit.

"Onward Christian Soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before..." is not a Christian hymn glorifying war or violence; it is a hymn talking about a different kind of war. War that stands for those who cannot stand; war that speaks for those who cannot speak; war that fights for the souls of our children against the naked aggression of the media, and the rape of our Christian values by corporations and commercial giants

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who languish in a mire and pit of greed and avarice of their own making and see our children and their future as just mere fodder for their mighty profit line.

“No!” cries Jesus as he drives the money lenders and salesmen out of the Temple in the Gospel story. And “No!” say we Christians as today we embrace this feast of “Christ the King,” and we acknowledge our allegiance to the charter of Christ’s values once more. No to greed. No to bigotry, No to racism, No to discrimination, No to waste and No to a culture of death. But with Jesus we can say “Yes” to love. Love that finds its home in the face of a new born child, full of hope, innocence and promise of the future. Love in the eyes of a four year old who sees Grandma as friend, comfort, wise, kind and teacher and never as old and useless. Love in the energy and wide-eyed adventure of the teenager, joyful, full of fun, leaping into the future with all the romantic idealism of youth. And love shared of friends around a Thanksgiving table, a table open to all.

With Jesus we say: “yes” to forgiveness, because in today’s Gospel story our King chose to die that we might be forgiven. He chose to forgive the good thief who turned to him in his own moment of desperation.

And with Jesus we say, “yes” to compassion and a Kingdom of compassion. There have been a few people in the last one hundred years who have truly transcended the narrow confines of their own life to reach out to all who ever they might be. Today in this Feast of Christ the King Jesus invites us as individuals, and you and I as a Parish to be one of those people. To stand shoulder to shoulder with Desmond Tutu, Billy Graham, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, Princess Diana, Gladys Aylwood, and our own Bishop Paul Marshall in building a Kingdom worthy of the presence of Jesus Christ our King. And that stand begins here, now, in this place, shoulder to shoulder with your fellow Episcopalians. It takes place and begins here in this Castle of the Lord made of river stone from our river and built by the blood, sweat and tears of the worshippers who have gone before us. Belong to this fight and you have time for no other, for our enemy does not rest. Hate takes no vacations. Bigotry takes no holidays. Belong to this fight and we cannot fight with one another for Jesus said: “No house can stand, that is divided against itself.”

If you want a fight, there is plenty to go around, albeit, against poverty, sickness, loneliness, hunger, or the evil that would rip down our walls and feed on the future of our children.

So today Christ instructs us: let your banner be prayer and your sword good works; let faith be your shield.

“Brother to brother yours in life and death” Arthur tells Lancelot before they go into battle.

Today, on this the Feast of Christ our King, let us unite brother and sister, parent and child and rally round our King.

Let us pray: “Jesus, Lord, Savior, today we honor you as King of our lives. Dispel the darkness of evil, arm us with the strength of your Gospel word. That we, though broken,

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may be made whole. That we, though blind, may be allowed to see. That we, though weak, may find our strength in you and together win the Kingdom you taught. Teach us to fight, the fights worth fighting, that all may see the loving Justice of your rule.

Amen +

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