

## Homily Feast of Christ the King – Year A 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016

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I find today's Gospel personally challenging. The Gospel clearly sets out how my life will be judged. I will not be judged in terms of the commandments, or even the law, my plans and intentions will be of no consequence. I will be judged by my actions. I find this very confronting.

A reporter writing a feature article on planning for the future had read the book "Doing Business with Benedict". The reporter became intrigued with the 'obviously' impractical idea that a 1500 year old monastic rule could have anything to say about modern business. So he decided to interview a monk from a local monastery and the CEO of a large national retail chain. The reporter planned a series of detailed questions and sent them to the CEO and the monk. Within a few days he was contacted by the CEO's assistant and was invited to lunch. The assistant informed the reporter that a detailed response had been prepared to his questions, which would be couriered to him along with the company's planning documents. The documents arrived and the reporter

was impressed with the detail and effort the company had put in to their preparation. Subsequently he lunched with the CEO and over an impressive array of food and wine he was treated to an equally impressive presentation of the company's plans. A week went by and the reporter had received no reply from the monk so he rang the monastery. Did you receive my questionnaire? He asked. Yes, was the reply. Well were you able to answer my questions about your future plans? Well not quite said the monk but why don't you come over to the monastery and we can talk.

The reporter arrived at the monastery pressed the door bell and was greeted by a monk and ushered into a small meeting room. It was the middle of winter and the room was airy but cold. The monk wore a black beanie and had clearly been working outdoors. The reporter was offered a cup of tea and some biscuits. How many monks live here the reporter asked? Five was the reply, Fr John died last month. Five replied the reporter. He could not help but contrast the simple conditions of the monastery with the luxury of the CEO's office. The reporter thought to himself; this place will be closed before I write this story, the place is a total waste of space, the land must be worth

millions. He asked the monk: Aren't you worried about the future?

After a disturbingly long period of silence the monk replied; my ultimate future, my salvation consumes all my energy that's why I became a monk. The future of the monastery is in God's hands. The Reporter looked dismissive, thinking typical religious 'mumbo-jumbo'. The monk looked at the reporter and said: The past is history we can't change, the future is a gift we may or may not get, and all we have is the moment, the here and now. The monk went on; it's here talking to you in this room, this is where I act for, and encounter Christ, nowhere else. My son you must learn to live in the moment squeeze every last drop out of it. The reporter look puzzled. The monk continued the great question for me is not: Is there life after death? No, the question is: Is there life before death. You see my son you are worried about how you will plan for something that may or may not happen, where as I believe that only a small amount of my time should be spent in the future, most of my effort should be spent in the moment being present to you. The reporter left perplexed and disappointed saying to himself; this place has no future.

He wrote his feature article lavishing praise on the CEO and featuring colour photos of the big bright blue stores about to open nationwide. He left out all reference to the monastery, he considered the visit a total waste of time although he did pass the home of a horse breeder on the way and stored that away for an article he was planning on the horse breeding industry. Some eighteen months later on his way to interview the leading horse breeder he drove past the monastery. Recognising the monk loading cattle onto a truck he stopped. Aren't you the monk I interviewed? Yes; was the reply. Before he could say anything the monk asked: How are you going with living in the moment? Ah that; was all the embarrassed reporter could reply astounded that the monk could remember their conversation in such detail. I've got a 1 o'clock lunch appointment; said the reporter and drove off. As he drove he pondered the fate of the CEO whose business model was sadly flawed, all the people put out of work and dejected blue stores now all up for sale. The reporter thought to himself; must visit that monk again his business breeding cattle seems to be going well.

The feast we celebrate today, the Feast of Christ the King is a comparatively modern feast. It is a feast that forces us to look at our actions not our plans. It's a feast focused on the here and now. The Feast of Christ the King was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 when the world and principally Europe was in utter turmoil. The ultra-right-wing fascist's parties were on the ascendency in Germany, Italy and Spain. Russia was under Communism and Joseph Stalin was establishing his brutal authority. Imperial Japan was undergoing rapid industrialization and militarization under the slogan "Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Armed Forces". It is fair to say the world was sliding into an abyss with these nations planning global domination. In the face of political forces that would unleash unimaginable brutality on countless millions Pope Pius XI extolled a different reality. A reality ruled not by a despotic tyrant but by a shepherd/king who would not brutally subjugate his flock but would in fact give his life for his sheep. Pope Pius XI's prayer was; "that the family of nations, shattered by the wound of sin will submit to Christ's sweet empire". There was a catch however Christ the King would call us all to account. We will be called to account based not on our plans

and intentions but how we treated Christ in the other. Christ in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned. As a member of a society which struggles to feed and provide shelter for the homeless yet spends \$2 Billion on sports stadiums; as a member of a society which turns its back on refugees under the pretext of preventing drownings at sea, I don't relish my judgement. I don't know about you but the thought of standing alone before Christ justifying the misery I have inflicted on others is the thing of nightmares. Will I be like the CEO and the rulers of the world who find their plans amount to nothing or will I be like the monk and squeeze every last drop out of the here and now and do everything I can to embrace the reality of Christ the King. A frightening choice because how I spend eternity will depend on it.