CHRIST THE KING 2026

We see and hear a lot about someone who waited a long time to be King, someone who had to step into the shoes of our longest serving monarch. Charles 3rd was ready to reign and is now, I believe, doing so wisely and well, despite some of his in-laws creating too many negative headlines! Do you remember that very intelligent and witty speech given inches away from the President of the United States – and it went right over his head? Do you remember that more awkward moment recently in the pouring rain in Antigua whilst attending a 40th anniversary military parade? I saw the hilarious cover of Private Eye the other day when I was giving Home Communion to one of our brave parishioners. Here it is:

"STORM HITS ROYAL TOUR". The King asks 'Would you get me an umbrella?' And a very well-dressed military man in white replies, 'That'll be one trillion pounds plus an apology'. Meanwhile Camilla (who does have an umbrella) comments, 'This rain is terrible!' and the reply from an equally smart military woman: 'I'm sure King Charles is doing his best.'

Well, if we didn't laugh, we would cry! That's certainly true for preachers and teachers and so many others. Leadership of any kind is testing, difficult, controversial - just as it can be imaginative, kind, hopeful. It certainly isn't about pleasing all the people, all of the time, because that is impossible.

On this last Sunday of our liturgical year, the colour red is meant to energise our mood to acknowledge the Christ figure who reigns in glory for all time and all eternity. Is He our inspiring Teacher and our faithful Guide, our reliable Shepherd or humble Servant? He is all of these things, ironically, to all people and the reason we are here to meet him in Word and

Sacrament. We need all our senses, (something I was trying to say about ‘Peace’); we need all of them to experience, to taste and see, that the Lord is good. The prophet Ezekiel or the anonymous Psalmist knew this in their bones as well as their hearts. St Paul said so wonderfully what has to be said on this feast day about the Son of God’s leadership and example: “God has put all things under Christ’s feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

And then our reading from Matthew’s Gospel bravely turns our minds to think and pray what the implications are for us to become children of the kingdom. In another well-known monthly magazine, Sister Theresa Keswick, guides us:

“This means, for all of us, the urgent necessity of getting to know Jesus as God made manifest. So, it is work: reading, thinking, praying and the practice of down-to-earth charity. On his deathbed, Pascal said that were he to recover, he’d spend the rest of his life alleviating the sufferings of the poor.”

Matthew doesn’t let up on this calling or vocation and certainly doesn’t let us off the hook. Whether it is supporting the Rotary’s urgent fund this winter for the children of Ukraine or whether it is visiting and sitting alongside one of our local prisoners; whether it is reaching out to the homeless or mentally-ill, or both, this is Christian aid and love in action.

Think how much gossip there must have been about Christ’s own decisions and actions, talking with tax-collectors or prostitutes or, someone who couldn’t see and someone who couldn’t walk. Think about his own ‘show trial’ and humiliating death; there was even argument about which words fit the ‘right’ king at the head of the Calvary cross; and think how

those closest to him let him down by deserting him. Today we remember and praise no ordinary King. There were no signs of privilege or power in this man born to be our Saviour. And yet other leaders were afraid of him, like Herod or Pilate…this gentle king who rode a donkey into Jerusalem instead of a bullet-proof limousine. Vulnerability, rejection even, are also features of leadership offered. I think of Charles Causley's wonderful poem, 'Ballad of the Breadman':

"He went round to all the people
A paper crown on his head.
Here is some bread from my father,
Take, eat, he said.

Nobody seemed very hungry.
Nobody seemed to care.
Nobody saw the god in himself
Quietly standing there."

Christ the King is our very best friend and redeemer and sanctifier
constantly worrying about us, especially those who worry too much or, protest too much. So, what is asked of us as we approach the new year of another Advent season, is to make room for Him entering our home, our work, and all our busy-ness, and to hear the echo of those words again from last Sunday, "Peace be with you."

Seek out a corner or a place, to light your own candles to welcome Him in where you are and, for whom you are, precious in His eyes. Invite Him to sit down with you and

receive His unconditional love, companionship, and yes, laughter. AMEN.