



Come and See!

Week of November 20, 2022

The Word ...

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
(Col 1:12-20)

Pondering the Word ... Today, in Western Christianity, is the Feast of Christ the King of the Universe; it is also called the Feast of the Reign of Christ. This final Sunday of the liturgical year brings us full circle into Advent to begin again with the celebration of Emmanuel.

So, what’s this feast all about? You may recall in John’s Gospel, Chapter 6, “*Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself*” (v.15). So...we are celebrating a title, a role for Jesus he does not want and actually runs away from?! The kind of king his followers wanted—and given the rumblings of Christian nationalism, still want—is not the kind of king Jesus is or ever wanted to be. Jesus was not and is not a worldly leader; he is the leader of the world—the *Cosmos*—and there’s a big difference.

Eastern and Orthodox Churches have held onto this understanding of “The Christ” a lot better than most Catholics and Protestants. The wonderful gift of the Incarnation is that it allows us both a relationship with the human Jesus as well as an opportunity to stand in awe in the light of the transcendent, the “Word” of John’s Gospel, Chapter 1, “*through whom all things came to be.*”

Authors like Teilhard de Chardin, Diarmuid O’Murchu, Ilia Delio, Judy Cannato, and Richard Rohr invite us to step outside the box in which many of us have put God to look at “The Christ,” “The Anointed” in a whole new way. What a wonderful way to prepare for Jesus’ birth by really coming to know the very source of our light and our life! “*Your religion is not the church you belong to, but the cosmos you live inside of.*” (GK Chesterton.)

Living the Word ...

NOTE: I said coming to “know,” not coming to “understand!” Some of these authors’ books make my eyes glaze over, but that doesn’t keep me from trying! First, we need to get over our need to have things figured out. Then we need to get over the idea that we control any of this! Think about preparing this Advent by reading a book like *The Universal Christ* by Richard Rohr. It’s pretty accessible (e.g., he starts by explaining “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name! 😊) Often, when I suggest this topic of the Cosmic Christ, people balk: “This stuff is way beyond me,” and I respond, “Of course, it is! That’s why it’s so great!” It takes work, but can open your eyes to a vastly deeper sense of faith. Be not afraid, the Spirit will lead. “*In Christ, all things hold together.*”

Personal Reflections and Ideas ...

Mon, Nov 21: *“There was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads”* (Rv 14: 1-3, 4b-5). So when they look at each other, they see God’s name tattooed on the other’s forehead. When they look in the mirror at themselves, they see it as well (yes, I know it’s backwards, but go with me here). **Reflection/Provision:** Imagine how different the world would be if, when we looked around, we would see God’s name everywhere! Imagine if when we looked in the mirror each morning, we would see God’s image in our face. Picture that you and everyone you meet today bears God’s name and reflects God’s image. Picture it because it is true.

Tue, Nov 22: *“Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and what fills it resound; let the plains be joyful and all that is in them! Then shall all the trees of the forest exult”* (Ps 96). **Reflection/ Provision:** Harkening back to Sunday’s reflection, once our vision of Jesus becomes that of the Cosmic Christ, psalms like this one take on a whole new richness. The beauty of creation, the idea of plains being joyful, trees exalting, and rivers *“clapping their hands”* (tomorrow’s psalm) become more than mere words and images. We can be moved at a sensory level, seeing the waving of grain as joy, the seasonal changes of the trees—even the silence of winter—as exultation. We can hear the (c)lapping of the water against the river bank in appreciation and happiness. Sit with this psalm, and if you are able, go for a walk in nature. Or copy and paste the psalm verse into an internet search and select the option, *“Images.”* Drink in what you see.

Wed, Nov 23: *“Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I shall give you a wisdom in speaking”* (Lk 21: 12-19). **Reflection/Provision:** WHAT? No script? No pre-recorded testimony? No teleprompters? Could I ever be so confident in my faith as to not prepare ahead of time? Thankfully, most of us are not called before accusers. Perhaps the only *“trials”* we face are knowing the right words to say to a grieving friend or answering difficult questions about God’s presence amid sin and sorrow. Jesus’ advice applies here as well, remembering that often, the best thing we can offer is not our words but our listening, non-anxious presence. When faced with not knowing what to say, whisper a quick prayer: *“Holy Spirit, open my ears to listen. Guide my lips to speak your word.”*

Thu, Nov 24: *“And now, bless the God of all. . . . May he grant you joy of heart and may peace abide among you”* (Sir 50:22-24). **Reflection/Provision:** Today is Thanksgiving Day in the United States, but these words from Sirach I offer for everyone. *May Jesus, the Christ, grant you joy this day. May you find things to be grateful for and may gratitude come to rest in your heart so that peace may abide within and among you and all those you encounter.* If you are struggling, try this little assignment: see if you can write down 30 things for which you are grateful. If you can’t get to 30, then write down as many as you can. You can do this alone, as a family, or with friends. Gratitude has a way of expanding our hearts and minds to think of even more things we might take for granted. Be grateful.

Fri, Nov 25: *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”* (Lk 21:29-33). **Reflection/ Provision:** Jesus says that not only earth, but heaven too will pass away, and a new Jerusalem will come from God. Jesus is telling us is that our earthly images of what heaven is to be, our all-too-human concepts of what God is and is not will be blown away like the dust of the earth. The Word, *“through whom all things came to be;”* the Word of truth and justice will stand and stand forever. This is heaven. This is what really matters. Pray to Jesus, our brother. Pray to the Christ, King of the Cosmos, that his kingdom of peace be ours today.

Sat, Nov 26: *“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life”* (Lk 21:34-36). **Reflection/Provision:** As I look back on past reflections on this passage, some of my words seem trivial now: jokes about carousing and drunkenness, *“the anxieties”* of Christmas preparations and gift buying—all these have morphed into serious existential anxiety for many and deaths from addictions. It’s not so much about becoming *“drowsy”* as it is becoming disillusioned, even desperate. I imagine Jesus’ words to those who suffer today would not be the warning: *“Beware.”* Instead, Jesus would utter words of comfort and encouragement: *“Come to me, those who are weary, anxious, afraid, depressed. I will give you rest.”* If you are suffering from anxiety or addiction, seek professional help; don’t seek relief in carousing and drunkenness. If you know someone who doesn’t seem quite themselves, gently be present to them. This can be a tough time of year for many people. Reach out for help. Reach out to help. And ask for Jesus’ comforting embrace.