

**Homily for the 75th Anniversary of Christ the King Parish
Greenup**

**The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
November 25, 2012**

**+ Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Father Haag, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the question of Pontius Pilate resounds down through the centuries: "What is truth?" (John 18:38). This is the question he asked Jesus immediately following Our Lord's concluding words in the passage of Saint John's Gospel we have just heard.

Many people continue to ask this same question today. Some ask it with a sincere desire to know what the truth is, to know the meaning, the purpose, and the value of their lives. They want to know the truth so as to live according to it to find the happiness for which their hearts long.

Yet there are others, perhaps in increasing numbers, who ask this question with mocking tones, as if to say there is no truth and that, consequently, we are free to live as we want, without consequences or responsibilities.

In the second volume of his monumental work, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI reflected on this important question:

What is truth? Pilate was not alone in dismissing this question as unanswerable and irrelevant for his purposes. Today too, in political argument and in discussion of the foundations of law, it is generally experienced as disturbing. Yet if man lives without truth, life passes him by; ultimately he surrenders the field to whoever is the stronger. 'Redemption' in the fullest sense can only consist in the truth becoming recognizable. And it becomes recognizable when God becomes recognizable. He becomes recognizable in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God entered the world and set up the criterion of truth in the midst of history. Truth is outwardly powerless in the world, just as Christ is powerless by the world's standards: he has no legions; he is crucified. Yet in his very powerlessness, he is powerful: only thus, again and again, does truth become power.¹

It was, you will recall, just after Pilate's interrogation of Jesus that "the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews'" (John 19:2-3). In this mockery of his majesty the truth was revealed, even if it was not fully understood or recognized: "His dominion is an

everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

For the past seventy-five years your parish has stood as a reminder to the village of Greenup - and to the surrounding area - of the Kingship of Jesus Christ and for this we give thanks to God this day. In recent years, much work has been done to the physical structure of the church building - from brickwork to windows to wiring - and the hall and the rectory. I thank you for these efforts and applaud your efforts to keep your buildings properly maintained.

Even as we echo with humble gratitude the words from the Book of Revelation which we have heard, "To him who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power for ever and ever," we cannot but notice that too many of our brothers and sisters have not fully accepted Jesus' kingship over their lives and have not yet conformed their lives to the him who is the truth. They have forgotten - or perhaps they never knew - that "Man becomes true, he becomes himself, when he grows in God's likeness."²

This realization lies at the heart of the Holy Father's proclamation of the Year of Faith which has, as one of its aims, a deepening of our

knowledge and understanding of the faith. “Knowledge of faith,” Pope Benedict XVI reminds us, “opens a door into the fullness of the saving mystery revealed by God. The giving of assent implies that, when we believe, we freely accept the whole mystery of faith, because the guarantor of its truth is God who reveals himself and allows us to know the mystery of his love.”³

When flung wide open, this door of faith opens onto the Kingship of Jesus Christ, for the door is Christ himself, who is the gate for his sheep and who is “the way and the truth and the life” (cf. John 10:9; John 14:6). As important as it is to maintain and beautify the physical house of God, the parish church, it is much more important to maintain and beautify the temple of the Holy Spirit that we are (cf. I Corinthians 6:19).

We sang in the responsorial Psalm today, “holiness befits your house, O Lord, for length of days” (Psalm 93:5). These are true not only of the physical building and of worship within it, but of every aspect of our daily lives. We grow in holiness the more we place ourselves under the gentle yoke of Christ the King and live according to the truth of his words (cf. Matthew 11:28). As we grow in holiness we also grow in truth; as we grow in holiness and truth we become our true and authentic selves.

Unfortunately, in our world today there are many people unwilling to place themselves under the lordship of Jesus Christ, to learn from him the will of the Father and the ways in which we may live in his love. You have heard the statistic, no doubt, that the second-largest religious group in the United States is non-practicing Catholics. I am sure that many of us know personally the people and stories behind these numbers. They are our sisters and brothers, our nieces and nephews, our sons and daughters, our neighbors and co-workers.

What can we say to reignite in them the fire of faith? What is Christ inspiring us to do to proclaim the faith anew to these lost sheep? These questions lie at the heart of the Year of Faith. Of this task, the Holy Father wrote: "To rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived, and prayed, and to reflect on the act of faith, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this Year" (*Porta Fidei*, 9). To this end, I would like to propose to a three-fold plan to make the most of this Year of Faith.

First, we must be grateful for the faith we have received, for our encounter with the Lord. Families should strive to make their homes places where the family prays together, reads the Scriptures together, and

is nourished together at Sunday Mass. Families should strive to allow their faith to influence everything they do, rather than reserving their faith only for an hour or so on Sunday.

Second, we must endeavor to understand all the more clearly the faith we profess. If a friend, family member or co-worker asks us a question about our Catholic faith, can we provide an adequate – and correct – answer? We ought to be able to do so.

Third, we must share our faith, not only with our family and friends, but with our co-workers and everyone we meet. As the Holy Father reminds us, “Confessing with the lips indicates in turn that faith implies public testimony and commitment” (*Porta Fidei*, 10).

This three-fold plan is the way of discipleship and through it we learn to follow Jesus Christ and allow his reign to extend over every aspect of our lives. If we honor Christ our King with our lives here, we will, at the end of our lives, be brought to share in the glory of his reign in heaven and know there the fullness of lasting joy and peace.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 194.

² Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 192.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, 10.