

Solemnity of Christ the King

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Lectionary 162:

2 Sam 5:1-3 [*King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD, and they anointed him king of Israel.*]

Ps 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Col 1:12-20 [*Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.*]

Luke 23:35-43 [*"Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."*]

Possible preaching themes:

- We need a “new attitude” – an alliance between science and faith – for us to make progress and to live sustainably with the plane where God’s reign unfolds for us.
- The church can be a force for change, a catalyst for a moral revolution, where addressing the cry of creation means addressing the cry of the poor who are central to Jesus’ revelation about God’s reign.
- The balance of planetary life, established by the reign of Christ, depends upon love, admiration, and devotion grounded in faith.

Possible scientific resources:

- **The Goldilocks zone:** Many scientists suggest that the temperature of the earth hangs in just the right balance so that we can not only live and enjoy the climate in the various ways that we do but even that life as we know it can exist.
 - This is known as a “Goldilocks zone”
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2016-02-22/goldilocks-zones-habitable-zone-astrobiology-exoplanets/6907836>
 - Taking responsibility for the Goldilocks zone and caring for it requires more than scientific measures.
 - Climatologist Ramanathan believes it requires a spiritual revolution
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIQoB00QXA0&t=3032s> (start at 50:32)
- **Environmental racism:** In 1982, Benjamin Chavis coined the term, “environmental racism.”
 - He described it as “racial discrimination in environmental policy-making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities

of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements.” <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/what-is-environmental-racism-pollution-covid-systemic/>

- **The relationship between nature, people, and time:**
 - A dramatic reconfiguration entailing radical changes in the relationships between nature, people, and time must occur in order to overcome self-inflicted challenges that threaten human and planetary livelihood and thriving. https://www.clubofrome.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/COR-ENCI_Learning_new-ways.pdf

Homily outline:

- **King David**
 - Today’s reading from Sam 5 recalls when David was anointed King
 - David was an amazing character in the Bible, e.g., David and Goliath [1 Sam 17].
 - David was also incredibly flawed, e.g., episodes of David and Bathsheba [2 Sam. 11], and Absalom [2 Sam 13-17]
 - Being King does not mean being a saint or ruling as God desires.
 - In North America, we have no monarchy. But we may still think of ourselves as royalty when it comes to the treatment of our planet [Gen 1:26].
- **The Goldilocks zone:**
 - The earth hangs in a delicate balance. Even the temperature could be seen as a “Goldilocks zone,” not too hot and not too cold, but just right? Without care of how we live on earth, we bring judgment upon ourselves by damaging a delicate balance that sustains our lives and life overall [Ps 122:5]
 - If we have a regular place to live, a regular income, regular access to various modes of transportation, and regular ability to purchase food and goods, we are climate royalty. Everyday human activities are responsible for almost all or all of the gasses that upset the Goldilocks balance. Our planetary rule is flawed.
 - 1 billion people on earth are responsible for half of the threat to the Goldilocks zone while 3 billion people struggle to afford fuels that make everyday life possible. The use of fire by the remaining 3 billion also poses a threat to the Goldilocks zone.
- **Spiritual conversion**

- Scientists such as Veerabhadran Ramanathan, advisor to Pope Francis, helps us see that the sustainability of life on earth depends not just upon scientific advancement, but moral responsibility, a spiritual conversion.
 - “[W]e have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*” [Laudato Si’, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html]
 - We have to serve the planet and one another, not lord over what we have been given to the detriment of each other.
- **We have inherited what is holy from God [Col. 1:12].**
 - Our inheritance from God is not only salvation after life, but also the capacity for redemption in this life.
 - How will we, as the church, mobilize social and economic action to address the human inflicted imbalancing of the Goldilocks zone?
- **Christ the King**
 - We need to look to Christ as King and how Christ is redefining Kingship
 - Confessing before Christ
 - Seeking his wisdom
 - Embodying him as we live into the redemption of God
 - Jesus of Nazareth, at the point where he was dying and the world he knew was coming to an end, when mocked to save himself, honored a criminal who recognized him at his side and promised him paradise [Luke 23:42-43].
 - We may have to recognize our own criminality toward planet earth
 - What Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I categorized as “sin” https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020610_venice-declaration.html
 - And seek the mercy of Christ the King as the criminal at his side did. Precisely because we cannot save ourselves, and do not have the power to save a fallen Creation.
- **The Surya Project** provides an example of how to form a moral and spiritual revolution for sustainable, healthy, and thriving life on planet earth [<http://www.projectsurya.org/>]
 - What personal practices or church project might we want to start that looks to the Messiahship and promise of Christ to address planetary inequity that threatens life so delicately balanced?

Tags: climatology, environmental ethics, Goldilocks zone, kingship

About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.