

## WORSHIP NOTES

*Last Sunday after Pentecost • Christ the King • November 20, 2011*

### The Season

We have come to the end of another liturgical year and today's festival, Christ the King, concludes our Ordinary Time journey that began on June 19 with another festival, Holy Trinity. Unlike many of the other festivals of the church year, Christ the King is a recent addition to the calendar. It was established in 1925, and in 1969 it was moved to the last Sunday of the liturgical year, its eschatological tone setting the stage for Advent which follows.

Our readings from the Gospel of Matthew throughout Ordinary Time have drawn us into our discipleship and invited our participation in building the kingdom of God. There have been lessons on sowing seeds, digging for buried treasure, finding the purest pearl, casting wide nets, forgiving debts, tending vines, speaking forthrightly, searching out peaceable tenants, dressing properly for a wedding, investing wisely, and most importantly, as we hear today . . . caring for the hungry and thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, and visiting those in prison. The king we celebrate today rules with gentleness and care, and the kingdom he has made us part of is not bounded by geographic borders, or limited to any group . . . it is a kingdom of enduring and redeeming love. We pray today to reflect that love in the way we live . . .

### In Word . . .

Each of our texts today gives us some depiction of the triumphant rule and reign of Christ or the Messiah. In our first reading the shepherd is particularly attentive to the injured or sick and to those who have strayed. The flock has become scattered, lost, entangled, bruised, and battered; but God will gather his flock, rescue them, and bring them home. In our second reading, Paul prays we might come to know in our lives and our life together the same power that raised Christ from the dead and raised him to rule at the right hand of God. The third and final parable in Matthew 25 is proclaimed today. It begins, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory . . ." and Jesus speaks one more time about God's purpose for our lives and what it means to be accountable to God for the gift of life. The world has changed since this gospel was written, but the call of Jesus has not, and it begs the question. Are we behaving like citizens of the kingdom? Are the hungry and thirsty, the poor and neglected better off because of us? Is God's all-encompassing love visible in what we do? In the end our gospel says, that's what matters. The Sunday that closes the year leaves us with a challenge and also an assurance. The church is summoned to be an authentic and faithful witness to the gospel (caring for the least among us). God's care for us will be the source of our strength and conviction to carry out this work.

### And Song . . .

#### Traditional (9:00)

"Crown Him with Many Crowns" was first published in Bridge's *Hymns of the Heart* (1851), and became more widely known by its inclusion in *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (1868). The text touches on many of the images from our readings today, as we sing to the "Lord of love; Lord of life; Lord of peace; Lord of years." The joyful, march-like tune DIADEMATA (crowns) was written for this text by Sir George Elvey.

#### Contemporary (10:30)

"We Praise You O God" is a contemporary setting of the *Te Deum*, an early Christian hymn of praise sung at the end of Matins. The title comes from its opening words, *Te Deum Laudamus*, translated "You, God, we praise." Authorship is widely attributed to St. Nicetas (335-414) and the setting we sing today is by English composer Peter Jones, of the St. Thomas More Group.