



## Our Lord Jesus, Christ the King B November 25, 2018

- ◆ **The Feast of Christ the King**
- ◆ **A grandfather shares six foundational gifts grandparents can give their grandchildren**

Each year, our liturgical year ends with *The Solemnity of Our Jesus Christ the King*.

The following are some reflections on this lovely feast. The first one is by Fr. Flor McCarthy.

### **When it is the Judge who is on trial**

This being the last Sunday of the Church's year, we naturally think of judgement—the Last Judgement and our own individual judgement after death. Today's Gospel then comes as a great surprise, because the one who is being judged is Jesus himself, the one we call our King.

Sometimes in a court case it can happen that it is not so much the accused who is on trial but the judge. Indeed, sometimes it is the very concept of justice itself that is on trial.

Take the case of Louis Woodward, the 19-year-old English au pair whom a jury in Massachusetts convicted in 1998 of killing an eight-month-old baby, Mathew Eappen, who died in her care. But many people who followed the trial were convinced that a miscarriage of justice had taken place. In view of conflicting medical evidence, it was hard to see how the jury could have found, beyond a reasonable doubt, that she had killed the baby. Her defense team appealed against the verdict.

At the start of the case, Louise was the one who was on trial. But now the focus shifted onto the judge, Hill Zobel, who was reviewing the verdict. As we waited for his ruling, questions were raised as to his character. It was said that he was a very independent-minded man. A man not swayed by popular opinion, or one who bowed to pressure. The verdict he reached would show if those claims were true. Now it was Judge Zobel who was on trial.

After careful deliberation, Zobel changed the jury's verdict of second-degree murder to involuntary manslaughter. Yes, child was dead, and Louise bore some blame for his death. But she was not a murderer. And since she had already served seventeen months in

prison, he set her free. In the eyes of most neutral observers, his verdict was a fair one. Judge Zobel emerged from the trial with an enhanced reputation. He was shown to be a man who was passionately concerned about justice.

Picture the scene in today's Gospel. Alone and unarmed, Jesus stands before Pilate on trial for his life. He has been accused by the Jews of stirring up trouble among the people, and of telling them that it was wrong to pay taxes to Caesar.

However, Pilate soon saw that Jesus was innocent of the charges. He even declared him innocent before the religious leaders. But the religious leaders began to exert political pressure on him. They threatened to report him to Rome for letting someone they claimed was an enemy of Caesar, go free.

Now the focus shifted from Jesus to Pilate. Pilate was now the one on trial. Would he see that justice was done? Jesus made it easy for him by assuring him that his kingdom was no threat to Caesar. Pilate did struggle with it. But then he began to compromise. He tried to appease Jesus' accusers—first by having Jesus scourged, and then by releasing Barabbas. When this didn't satisfy them, he bowed to pressure and handed Jesus over to them.

Pilate knew what he had done. He called for water and washed his hands in the vain hope of cleansing himself of the stain of innocent blood. In the end, he is the one who stands condemned. With a click of his fingers he could have set Jesus free. Yet out of fear for his own position, he allowed the most innocent person ever to walk this earth to go to his death. His cowardice contrasts with the quiet courage of Jesus (and Judge Zobel).

Today political leaders are frequently subjected to similar pressures. Pressure groups get on to them, threatening to put them out of office unless they get their way. At one time or another, all of us come under pressure. All of us find ourselves on trial.

By the way we live, especially by our attitude to truth and justice, we declare whether we are on the side of Christ and his kingdom, or whether like Pilate we take the way of evasion and cowardice. It is not possible to remain neutral.

Who judged Pilate? He judged himself. We too judge ourselves. Don't wait for the Last Judgement. It is

happening now. It takes place every day, in little ways. Long before the end, people will already have judged themselves. In a thousand ways they will have already chosen for or against themselves, for or against their brothers and sisters, for or against the truth. God's judgement will not accomplish something new. It will merely show up what already is.

Let us never forget, however, that the Father's love and mercy are at the heart of the kingdom. Jesus didn't tell us to fear the last day, only to be ready for it.

What a joy it is to belong to Christ and his kingdom. To let our lives be ruled by his spirit, and in our own small way to work for the spread of his kingdom—a kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace.

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The following piece is from a liturgy resource book called *Living Liturgy*.

On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, we clearly see that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. Even on this solemnity when we so much focus on Jesus' identity as the victorious one, we still are not far from seeing ourselves in this great mystery as well.

With respect to Jesus, this solemnity celebrates Christ as worthy of our worship because he has been the "faithful witness" who "freed us from our sins by his blood." He became incarnate and dwelt among us and didn't shrink back from anything of our human condition except sin. He persevered through our misunderstanding and obtuseness. He trusted us enough to send us out on his very mission. He died for us. He did all this before he was raised up on the third day.

With respect to us, this solemnity invites us to renew our commitment to serve him with all our hearts. It invites us to renew our self-giving stance as disciples who follow the King. In our self-giving as we are transformed so is the world because he has made us into a kingdom (second reading). The surprise of this feast is that we are God's kingdom already. We already share in his victory for we are "freed from our sins."

At the end of this liturgical year we are invited by the liturgy once again to fall in love with our King, that gentle competitor who won for us eternal life. "To him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen."

### **Living the Paschal Mystery**

(The term Paschal Mystery refers to the death and resurrection of Christ, which is also enacted in our lives as we reflect on our "dyings" and "risings" - our failures

and successes. Living Liturgy has this to say about Living the Paschal Mystery as this feast.)

Self-giving service is a small price to pay for our share in this eternal glory. Living the paschal mystery means that we don't count the cost but always find strength, hope, encouragement in the glimpse of final victory that we are repeatedly given throughout the liturgical year. Living the paschal mystery means that we see the victorious Christ even in the everyday trials and difficulties that we face. Living the paschal mystery means that we are ever faithful to the rhythm of dying and rising as it unfolds every day—in our prayer, work, leisure. Living the paschal mystery means that we are "priest" (that is, mediators) for those whom we meet—that we are the body of Christ leading others to holier lives and happier commitment. If someone should then ask us: "What have you done?" (See gospel), our answer would come quickly and surely—we have served our King.

### **A grandfather shares six foundational gifts grandparents can give their grandchildren**

The following article is by Tom McQueen, an award-winning author and the founder of LegacyNationUSA.com.

Plain and simple, my three-year-old grandson owns me. I was pulling Ethan in his favorite red wagon to the neighborhood park last week, and when we arrived, he hopped out of his seat, looked up at me, and slowly stretching his arms across his chest, smiled and said, "I love you, Grandpa ... not this big, and not this big, and not this big, but T-H-I-S — B-I-G."

Grandchildren shower us with the riches of unconditional love and affection. Their words can heal a lifetime of suffering; their hugs can rejuvenate a broken spirit.

For those who consider grandparenthood a sacred vocation, that awareness prompts us to ask: What can we share with our grandchildren today that will enrich their lives as they journey toward tomorrow? After 25 years as a marriage and family therapist and now, as I embrace my new life as a grandfather, I believe that there are six foundational gifts that we can give our grandchildren as an ongoing legacy.

### **FAITH**

Nothing matters more. In a world of instant gratification and a what's-in-it-for-me? attitude, helping our grandkids to discover, accept, and share the love that God has for them creates a framework for healthy self-esteem and positive interpersonal relationships as they grow up.

The inquisitive mind of a young child is fascinating and miraculous. Why? is a question that gets asked repeatedly by the prekindergarten crowd. Having lunch in the food court at the mall recently, I was sitting at a table next to a grandmother with two young granddaughters. One of them inquired, “Grandma, why did God make me?” In a hurry to finish her meal and get to the next store, she replied, “Not now, honey. When you go to church, you can color in your Bible book.”

No matter the time or the place, never miss a faith opportunity with your grandchildren. A simple response like, “God made you and your sister because he loves you so much,” would have answered the question at the moment, while encouraging more discussion at a later time.

## **CHARACTER**

In my seminars throughout the country, I routinely question grandparents about what kind of legacy they want to leave for their grandchildren. Initially, they talk about family photographs, genealogies, and sentimental objects that are handed down through the generations. Eventually, though, the discussion focuses upon an assortment of intangibles like trust, respect, hope, and integrity.

A grandfather at a diocesan men’s conference in Lincoln, Nebraska, shared this wish: “After I die, I want my grandkids to remember me as a trustworthy man who always tried to do the right thing.” Very few grandparents truly grasp what a monumental impact they have as role models for their grandchildren.

As men and women of faith, the most powerful memories for our grandkids will be the ones defined by our character and commitment to live in the image and the likeness of God.

## **FUN**

It isn’t easy being a kid. There’s parental pressure, peer pressure, school pressure, and it’s all terribly burdensome. Therapists treat children and adolescents for anxiety and eating disorders, drug addiction, major depressive episodes, and a host of other problems and concerns.

As crazy as it sounds, with all the demands that children and teenagers encounter in society today, there’s little time remaining to experience any genuine enjoyment in life. Having fun with our grandchildren can be the best investment we can make in their future. And fun does not have to be the expensive kind. A trip to a playground, collecting shells at the beach, tossing a football in the backyard, or making a beaded necklace in the kitchen are all opportunities to share good times with your grandkids.

As one grandmother confided, “I know that my grandchildren love the presents I bring to their home at Christmas, but the presence that I share with them on the weekends is the greatest gift I can give.”

So you’re 2,000 miles apart. What then? My neighbor lives here in Florida while his teenage grandson is in Michigan. They both have computers and discovered a program that facilitates ongoing chess matches. One of the blessings of technology is that it enables us to stay connected with our families and friends despite the distance separating us.

## **WISDOM**

My grandfather was one of my childhood heroes. Every Wednesday morning during summer vacations, we would walk about a half-mile to the local bus stop and ride downtown so he could run his errands.

Before we boarded the bus to go back home, we’d stop at the local five-and-dime, sit at the counter together, and enjoy a root-beer float. I remember being able to ask Grandpa about things that I didn’t want to mention to my parents, teachers, or anyone else.

Not only did he give me his opinion and advice, he shared stories with me about people, places, and events that happened in his childhood. Of course, I didn’t realize it at the time, but many of those conversations allowed me to acquire a perspective and a frame of reference for my own life as it evolved over the decades.

One of the potent treasures that we can give to our grandchildren is the wisdom we’ve acquired from navigating the obstacles and challenges that have shaped our lives.

So on your next trip for an ice cream with the grandkids, family visit, or shopping excursion to the mall, don’t miss the chance to share with them the mistakes and miracles that you’ve encountered along the way—your wisdom will be a hope and a help to them for years to come.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

Last fall, I was moderating a retreat for junior-high-school students. When we broke into small groups, I asked about a dozen sixth-graders what their grandparents could do for them that would make them happy.

One of the girls said, “I want Grandma and Grandpa to come to my piano recital next week.” A young boy wanted a baseball glove for his birthday. Nothing was unusual about their requests until we reached the last girl in our group, Elizabeth. With tears in her eyes, she said, “My grandparents would make me happy if they would just talk to me.”

Communication is to family dynamics what blood is to the body. Anybody can claim to be a grandparent, but that is a role, not a relationship. Genuine engagement with our grandkids is nurtured with an investment of time and conversation.

Considering that mothers and fathers average about nine minutes a day in meaningful dialogue with their children, grandparents become valuable resources in keeping their grandkids connected to real-life learning experiences, rather than allowing them to be held hostage in the solitary prison of television and Internet addiction.

## IMAGINATION

According to Albert Einstein, “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Creativity is becoming a lost art among children. With so much manufactured stimulation in their environments, God’s precious gifts of intellect, emotions, and will become paralyzed, and kids lose their capacity to invent and innovate.

What grandparents can do is give their grandkids the tools they need to capitalize on the power of their imagination. For example, don’t buy toys that just require children to push buttons or watch a DVD. Instead, encourage open-ended toys that they can decide how to use, like building blocks, animal figures, puppets, and dolls.

In addition, activities like coloring, cooking, and painting are all things that can be shared with grandkids. And, of course, storytelling is the cornerstone of imaginative development.

When Jesus traveled the countryside sharing stories with his followers, it was abundantly clear how he felt about children when he said, “Let the children come to me and do not hinder them ... whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it” (Luke 18:16).

For the grandchildren who color our world as blessings sent from God, it’s our privilege and responsibility to endow them with a heritage of faith, character, wisdom, fun, engagement, and imagination.

Have a blessed week,

*Le Saron*

