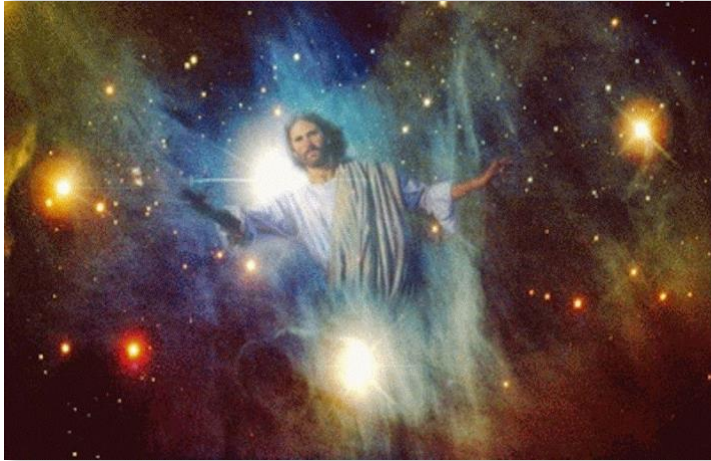


## Homily for Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021 – Christ the King

We don't use it in everyday language, but you may have heard the word "apocalypse". Apocalypse is a Greek word meaning "revelation"— something is



being revealed. So, the Book of Revelation, that second reading we heard from, is considered apocalyptic writing. The first reading, from the Book of Daniel, is also considered apocalyptic writing. Apocalyptic writing has to do with the end time (and here we are at the end of the liturgical year) and what will be revealed in the end time. This

apocalyptic writing, far from gloom and doom, is actually full of hope. Sin, violence, injustice, and even death—while all of them real—will, in the end, be defeated by God and God's enduring love. As St. Paul tells us, ***"Only faith, hope, and love will endure, and the greatest of these is love."*** Apocalyptic writing, like we have in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, while full of hope, were actually written when people were in the midst of a great struggle and needed words of encouragement. Isn't that what we all look for when we are struggling...words of encouragement?

The Book of Daniel came about around the year 600 B.C. when the Babylonians defeated Israel and deported many of their citizens to Babylon. Among them is a teenager named Daniel who spends the next 60 years in captivity. This is the Daniel who would not give up his Jewish faith even though he was being forced to believe in the pagan gods of Babylon. He was thrown into a den of hungry lions, but God protected him from being harmed. His three friends are tossed into a fiery furnace, and because of their faith, are not harmed either. God protected them during these times of trial. These incredible stories were circulated among the Jewish people in order to give them hope that, while they were enslaved in a foreign land, God had not abandoned them. Similarly, the Book of Revelation, supposedly written by the Apostle John while he was exiled on the Island of Patmos, was meant to be a message of hope and encouragement for Christians in the first century, who were undergoing severe persecutions on account of their faith.

In that same vein, in the 1920s the Franciscans urged Rome to mark the Feast of Christ the King, today's feast, because kings in Europe after World War I were destroying each other—in the name of Christianity --as they vied for power. It was only in the early 1960s, at the Second Vatican Council, did the Church make this a feast day agreeing with the Franciscans that we needed a bigger vision, a true king, to hold civilization together. This bigger vision is what we call Christ or the kingdom of God. When you find Christ the king, you find the kingdom of God.

Thanks to insights I've recently gleaned from Fr. Richard Rohr, I'm able to understand "the Christ" in a bigger and more hope-filled way, even though I'm not as articulate at explaining this mystery. For starters, Christ is not the last name of Jesus. Christ means the **anointed** one, the **chosen** one. Jesus, born 2000 years ago, is God's chosen one. God chose Jesus of Nazareth to reveal God's very self in human form beginning only 2000 years ago. However, God has been revealing God's self from the very beginning. The Big Bang, 14 billion years ago, is when God first decided to show God's self. That's the original incarnation, the original insertion of God into the created world.

The Book of Revelation tells us that God is the Alpha and the Omega (first and last letters in the Greek alphabet), the beginning and the end of all things. From the very beginning, God has inserted God's self in everything that exists. If that's true, that all creation is shot through with the presence of God, then everything, in a sense, is a sacrament. Everything is holy, including you and me, and the enemy that Jesus told us to love. Everything and everyone have the potential of revealing God because, quite simply, God is in everyone and everything.

So, God's great desire, from the very beginning, was to materialize—to enter into everything that makes up the material world. Wherever you have Spirit (God) entering into matter (the material world), you have the Christ. That's incarnation and has been happening for 14 billion years and is still happening. The revelation of God into human flesh occurred only 2000 years ago, and that is whom we call Jesus of Nazareth.

It was always God's plan to reveal God's self in human form. This is what Richard Rohr, for lack of a better term, calls Plan A. God—who is Spirit, shapeless, and formless—wanted to take form. St. Francis, perhaps more than any other human being to ever live, understood this. He saw the imprint of God's presence in

everyone and everything to the point of calling animals, flowers, the sun and the moon, his brothers and sisters. He knew about Plan A, God's great desire to be part of everything created, even earwigs and Brussel sprouts, if you can believe it!

Most of us, through no fault of anyone else, have been raised to believe in Plan B and not Plan A. Plan B begins with Adam and Eve sinning and, thus, alienating humanity from the love of God. In this alienated state, God could not possibly love us unless a price was paid. Once the price is paid, and we were deemed lovable again, then, and only then, would God and God's love become present to us. An angry deity must be appeased. Blood must be spilt in order to change God's mind about us. According to Plan B, the only reason God entered into human flesh, the only reason God became incarnate, was to atone for our sins. In this way of thinking, incarnation only occurred at that first Christmas and Jesus only came to mop up the mess created by clueless Adam and Eve and that damn snake.

The truth of it is, God only had one plan. There was no Plan B. God's plan was always to unite God's self, in love, with everything God created regardless of Original Sin. Before there ever was Original Sin, there was Original Grace. Jesus came to show us our original goodness, to show us how much we are loved even if we find ourselves as slaves in Babylon or in any lions' den.

You and I live inside something very sacred, very beautiful, and inherently holy. We live inside the Christ mystery. Everything you see, feel, and hear is shot through with the presence of God, and if it wasn't so, it would not even exist. Jesus is the personal Incarnation in a moment of time. Can you believe that one ordinary looking man, born in a dusty town in Palestine, is the eternal blueprint of what God has been doing since the beginning of time "in Christ?" This is what we believe when we say we believe in both "Jesus" and "Christ," the one born in time and the one who is timeless. This is the leap Jesus hoped Pontus Pilate would make but couldn't when he asked him, ***"Do you believe this of yourself, or have others told you about this?"*** When I try to answer Jesus's question I have to admit that, initially, others told me about Jesus the Christ, but now I believe this myself. This eternal one, this one born also in time, is indeed Christ the King of the Universe.

***Fr. Phil***