It was Benjamin Franklin who said, "In this world nothing is certain, except death and taxes." Our Lord didn’t have much to say about taxes, beyond giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. However, Our Lord has inspired His Church to set aside this entire month of November, allowing Sacred Scripture to instruct us on the Four Last Things; Death & Judgment, Heaven & Hell. Each is a reality of our faith. On this final Sunday of the month, this final Sunday of our Liturgical year, we turn our attention to the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

In today’s Gospel, Matthew presents a picturesque vision of Jesus, gloriously seated on His throne, surrounded by angels, and all the nations are gathered before him. The beauty of this setting is beyond our imagination. But…it is from this setting that Our Lord promises: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!” (Matthew 25:34)

This is the promise of our faith, the cause of our hope. When our lives and our worship are rightly ordered, we eagerly await the invitation to “Inherit the Kingdom prepared for us (you) from the foundation of the world!” (Matthew 25:34)

This is what it means to believe Jesus is the King of the Universe! For through Him all things were made! (John 1:3) But He is not like any earthly king. He is the Good Shepherd we hear about in today’s first reading, where Ezekiel writes: “I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark. … The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal.” (Ezekiel 34: 12, 15-16) These are words of a very Good Shepherd.

St. Paul likewise tells us in our Second Reading that Jesus must reign! (1Corinthians 15:25) But again, not like an earthly king, using the force of an army. For Christ to reign, He must take root within our hearts. He is the Good Shepherd we hear of in today’s Responsorial Psalm, where He gives His assurance, we shall want for nothing! (Psalm 23:1)
Jesus is the King who did not bind us with unnecessary rules or regulations. The rules of His Kingdom give us our freedom, for He is the King who rules with love and mercy. He forgives us when we have wronged Him…time and time again because He wants us to accept His gift of grace. He has done everything necessary for us to share in His Divine Life. The decision is ours; say “Yes” to the Good Shepherd, “Yes” to the King.

When January 1st draws near many of us make New Year’s Resolutions. If we’re honest with each other, at least some of us have to admit that we fall back into our old habits by the beginning of February, and we justify it by saying there is always next year! But, as Scripture tells us throughout November, we have no assurance of next year. So, I pose this question as out Liturgical Year draws to a close. Why don’t we make a New Liturgical Year Resolution …and ask God for the grace to offer our hearts to Him?

This means saying “No” to the excesses of the world in which we live. It means striving for holiness. It means finding deep within ourselves the courage to do God’s will in all things, without considering what others may say or think. It means dedicating ourselves to carry out His intentions in this world.

If we keep this resolution, we bring the beauty of God’s Kingdom into the world. …and when we do, we become happier… we become more joyful. Little things won’t bother us anymore – we’ll drive up and down Park Road just for the fun of it. Our gaze turns from seeing the flaws of others to recognizing their goodness, complimenting them on their gifts. Picking them up and encouraging them when they fall. When we do, our faith comes alive & we embrace the Gospel in such a way that it becomes more that what we do, it becomes who we are.

Jesus is the King who came to serve, not be served…to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28) He is the King who died so that we might live!

Jesus is not asking us to do extraordinary things. Most likely, none of us will be called to martyrdom. Only a relative few are called to serve in extraordinary ways. However, He asks all of us for simple acts of charity… simple deeds of mercy. Everything we have comes as a gift from God. If we cling to these gifts, they don’t grow…they just wither away.
God’s gifts to us are meant to become our gifts to others. If we have two (2) coats in our closet…give one away! If we have food at our home…drop some of it off next weekend for the Catholic Charities Food Pantry! If we have a neighbor who is lonely, make a gift of your time and stop by for a visit! If you have a toy in the closet gathering dust, give it away! These are all good starting points, but that is the point, we have to start.

As Saint Teresa of Calcutta taught us, “We are not called to be successful, we’re called to be faithful.” We’re called to little acts of love. We’re called to follow the example of the Good Shepherd, who came to serve. Maybe we’re even called to keep our New Liturgical Year Resolutions!

This is our challenge…to imitate the life of Christ.

The way love grows…is by loving. Through each little act of love, our love for God grows. His Kingdom will increase through our words and actions. Conversely, we can add to the problems of His Kingdom through our poorly chosen words or actions…or…simply by our inactions.

This is the challenge, these are things we should be good at; kindness … charity… mercy! Things that should come naturally! And when they do come naturally, we know the King of the Universe has become the King of our hearts.

So, especially today, as we worship Christ the King, pray for the grace to serve joyfully, and accept that grace when your prayer is answered.

May we serve faithfully in the court of Christ the King, so that we too may…“Inherit the Kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world!”

(Matthew 25:34)

And let us ask Our Blessed Mother; the Queen of Heaven — that through her intercession may we all receive the grace we need, and allow Christ to rule in our hearts so that we may do our part to build His Kingdom.

Our Lady, Queen of Heaven; Pray for Us!