

**HOMILY, FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING “A”
CATHEDRAL OF SS. PETER AND PAUL
NOVEMBER 19 - 20, 2011
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When I was in the monastic community of St. Meinrad Archabbey some years ago, I would tease people saying that I had another home “in the country.” A quaint little place of 120 rooms on 2000 acres of land. Just when I had the listener wondering if I was for real, I would add that what I actually had was a rather large monastery in Spencer County, and it wasn’t really mine. I shared it with one hundred of my intimate friends!.

It’s nice to dream about a home in the country, or maybe by the side of a lake, or deep in a beautiful forest. Someplace to which we can escape, be just ourselves, relax, rest and in general enjoy life. It might be a place where we invite family and special friends. A place where one can do things like pray, read, reflect, and take long leisurely walks. A place to be.

Today’s Solemn Feast of Jesus Christ, The King, is a celebration of the fact that we have “a home in the country”. As Christians, we call it heaven, or the kingdom of God. This special place comes with our Baptism, our dying and rising with Christ through the waters of Christian rebirth (that we will celebrate with persons in a few moments).

We have been anticipating this Feast of Christ the King for several weeks as we have heard Sunday readings from the Bible about the end of time, the last days and hints about what it means to belong to God’s Kingdom.

While at first hearing, this feast might seem to focus our attention completely on something in the next world, an experience of Christ reigning in Glory at the end of time. While this feast does acknowledge the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord of Heaven, it is a celebration that we live out our membership in the Kingdom of God here on this earth. Because how we live in the here and now, determines how we live in eternity with Christ, the ruler of our lives.

The prophet Ezekiel describes in dream-like fashion a kingdom where God cares for His people as a shepherd cares for the flock. The concluding chapters of Matthew's Gospel make a clear connection between how we live in this world and how we will live in the world to come. In other words, just standing around day dreaming about heaven isn't going to make that dream come true. Being responsible in this life, paying special attention to the poor, caring for one another in our earthly home will be the road to that longed for eternal "home in the country" of heaven.

Dreams frequently represent deep longings within our psyche. But dreaming won't bring about the reality of God's Kingdom. In fact, that Kingdom has already begun here in our world with the coming of Christ in our human flesh. He walks among us hungry for the food of bread as well as the food of compassion. He walks among us imprisoned behind real metal bars and behind the bars of addiction. He walks among us thirsting for water as well as the cooling water of forgiveness. He walks among us in the coatless stranger as well as the family member in front of us every day that is naked and exposed to cutting comments and unrelenting criticism.

Our “home in the country” of heaven is really our true and first home. This world in which we live now is a temporary place where we are mere visitors as we await the fulfillment of God’s promise to be one with us forever in the kingdom of heaven. And while we are waiting, we are loving, living, forgiving, anticipating, being compassionate and attentive to the voice of Christ speaking especially in the poor. This feast of Christ the King is a feast of relationships: ours with Christ; Christ’s with us; and all our lives together. What is at stake is the practice of heavens relationships now, in this world. Every day is an opportunity to practice for the kingdom of heaven, or, as a friend of mine prefers to say it, the *kin-dom* of heaven wherein we are made kin, one to another, through our saving relationship with Christ Jesus.

Christ is the King who reigns now. His throne is the wood of the Cross, and he shares that throne with us as we take up the Cross of our redemption every day. We carry it with one another’s help.

No one who has lived out his or her life in Christ in this world will be surprised by who shows up in the kingdom of heaven because we see Christ in each other and the stranger now. We feed Christ now; we slake Christ’s thirst now. We clothe Him and visit Him now.

There’s no need for us to worry if we’ll be goats or sheep at the end of time if we live like faithful members of Christ’s flock here in this world.