

Christ the King Year C 2007 – LK 23:35-43

- 1) Back in my first parish, there was a parishioner named Ray Murphy;
 - a) He was a New York City firefighter.
 - b) He was also killed on September 11th, 2001.
- 2) All of us remember how the remains were slowly removed from the ground zero and given proper burial.
 - i) Months after the terrorist attack, Ray's funeral took place.
- 3) It was an impressive event, as all those funerals were.
 - a) But the thing that impressed me most
 - i) was not the speeches given by the mayor or other city officials;
 - ii) It wasn't the sheer number of firefighters who showed up to honor him
 - iii) It wasn't the music or the homily or any of those things.
- 4) It was a picture.
 - a) Ray's fire company had the custom of taking little disposable cameras into firefighting scenes and photographing each other.
 - i) Someone took a picture of Ray Murphy on the morning of September 11th.
 - ii) And they blew it up to poster size and placed it at the entrance to the church.
 - b) In the picture the first tower had already fallen;
 - i) dimly through the dust and ash,
 - ii) you could see the entrance to the second tower.
 - iii) there in the middle of the picture was Ray;
 - (1) you could not see his face however, because he was not running away,
 - (2) but walking towards the second tower, itself minutes away from collapse.
- 5) The speakers at the funeral praised Ray Murphy
 - a) for his bravery, his sacrifice and his leadership.
 - i) And he deserved that praise.
- 6) But as I left that service,
 - a) I wondered if anyone really thought about what was said in that church;
 - b) especially standing in front of that picture;
- 7) For he was a leader who walked into a burning building.
 - a) Which one of us here would be willing to follow Ray?
 - b) We would like to think we would
 - i) but in reality no one would follow such a leader.
 - ii) And that is because, what Ray did was NOT what leaders normally do;
- 8) When have we ever seen a leader place himself or herself in harm's way?
 - a) Warren Buffett or Bill Gates have made billions as CEO's of their companies:
 - i) Have we ever seen them divest themselves of their riches to live like the people who work for them?
 - b) Hillary Clinton voted for the war in Iraq;
 - i) Have we ever seen her with a gun in Falluja?
 - c) Our Church's leadership
 - i) From the pope to the pastor,
 - (1) Has consistently proclaimed God's preferential option for the poor
 - (2) Have we ever seen them actually living like the poor they wish to help?
- 9) Of course not; and that is because Leaders do not struggle; they do not sacrifice.

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- i) That is what they have followers for.
- 10) And all too often this is the type of leader we want to follow;
 - a) Because we hope that by following the leader,
 - b) one day we will not have to suffer, struggle or sacrifice;
 - (1) Because one day we will be leaders too.
- 11) This was certainly the type of leader that Jesus' disciples thought they were following throughout the Gospel of Luke we have been hearing from this past Church year.
 - a) All their debates about who would be the first in the kingdom of heaven
 - b) were really all about who would be the first here on earth when their Leader Jesus became king.
- 12) And thus it makes perfect sense that his disciples abandoned him when he was arrested;
 - a) For leadership which leads to a cross was no leadership for them.
- 13) Indeed throughout his crucifixion we see the rulers sneering at Jesus,
 - a) the soldiers jeering at him
 - b) and even the one thief hanging on the cross along side him reviling him;
 - i) All saying the same thing; if you are the chosen one,
 - ii) if you are the Christ
 - iii) if you are the king,
 - iv) if you are the leader that so many people think you are
 - (1) then save yourself!
 - v) Because that is what leaders do.
- 14) But this is not what Jesus did.
 - a) Jesus did what Ray Murphy did
 - i) He entered into the burning building of this world.
 - ii) Not to save himself; but to save others; to save us.
 - (1) By revealing in his human flesh a God who loved us so much that he would suffer, struggle, sacrifice even die for us and with us.
 - (2) So that one day we might rise and live with him.
 - (3) Like that Good thief on the other side of Jesus would do;
 - (a) precisely because he put his trust in Christ as his king.
- 15) Luke presents the last moments in Jesus life in this way
 - a) because what Jesus did, so many of his followers would have to do;
 - b) They too would have to struggle to suffer and even sacrifice to reveal to others in their flesh the God whom Jesus revealed in his.
- 16) Our Church re-presents the last moments of Jesus' life on the Feast of Christ the king,
 - a) because even though she is as guilty of following false leaders and abandoning real ones as anyone
 - i) (Never forget it was the first 12 members of the church
 - (1) who abandoned Jesus and it was the first pope who who denied he been knew him)
 - b) She knows where true leadership is found;
 - i) Not at the top, among the few who have managed to make it there;
 - ii) But at the bottom of society,

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- (1) Where there are women and men who are leaders, precisely because they are followers of Jesus,
- (2) And are willing to struggle, to suffer and sacrifice
 - (a) so that the poor and the imprisoned,
 - (i) The migrant and the marginalized
 - (ii) might see Jesus in them.
 - (b) And so that we might see him there too.
- 17) Because if you have been looking for Jesus recently;
 - a) And since you are here I suppose you must have been –
 - i) And you have not had much success in finding him,
 - (1) Maybe it is because you have been looking for him in the wrong place;
 - (2) Don't look up towards heaven; but look down here on earth;
 - (a) Look for him in others; look for him in yourselves; look for him in your offices, your classrooms, your bedrooms, your lives.
 - (i) We might think that he is farthest from us there; but he is not he is closest to us there;
 - 1. Writing in our flesh the story of a god who suffers with us;
 - 2. And in that suffering invites to do what Jesus did – struggle sacrifice and serve.
 - 3. And in serving; lead.