

Last Pentecost A
20 November 2011

The Feast of Christ the King

Christ, raised from the dead, seated at God's right hand

Here we are in the present, praying for the future, "That the day may come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," a future we envision by recalling past promises made by the God of our salvation, hope of all the ends of the earth:

"Thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep...I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness...I myself will judge between fat sheep who pushed and butted at all and scattered all the lean, weaker animals...They shall no longer be ravaged...I will set up one shepherd, and he shall feed them."

And at an envisioned end of time, here/there in a future/becoming present is the Shepherd-King, sitting on his throne in all his majesty, a majesty of compassion and love, of promise-keeping, of bending down and gathering up.

A future becoming present: That is Us, the Church! God put all this power to work in Christ and made him the head over all things for the Church. The Church is his body. The fullness of Christ who fills all in all is our baptismal *YES* that accepts God's help and then seeks to do the work we have been given: making God's promise heard long ago and envisioned as being fulfilled at the end of time, making ready for the One who is coming by feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, cloaking the exposed, and giving hope to those imprisoned in the way things are *NOW* – not at the end of time

NOW – not when the economy improves

NOW – not when we have figured out how to stabilize ourselves

For God gives us the Christ, making past and future present, that the Church may be *generous in giving, faithful in serving, bold in proclaiming NOW*.

In all times, in all places, when the world has feared the spectre of having *less*, God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, has given power for flesh and blood to be *more*, to do *more* in Christ to restore and free and bring together all the peoples. This is the mission of the Church. This is the calling of Saint Luke's – the future of Saint Luke's is becoming present. Our past 100 years inspires visions for the future. We are called to position this parish's past and future at the feet of Christ who is our head *NOW*. How will we continue to offer Saint Luke's Church as a gift to God, given for the good of people? And how can we do it *NOW*?

By being *generous in giving, faithful in serving, and bold in proclaiming*.

Our Three-Year Strategic Plan, announced in 2010, is an intentional process through Centennial Year 2013, recognizing that there will be a deficit while we engage in prayerful discernment. If there will need to be changes in ministry priorities and model, we will have arrived at those conclusions by virtue of our faith. And we should not assume that *change* means *less*. Our Centennial Celebration is an extensive invitation to our life in Christ. Each and every planned event will be an opportunity for people to "come and see," an invitation for parishioners to grow

even deeper in faith, and for people who do not know us to “come and see” what this faith community is all about – not about becoming *less* but *more*.

Years back, when the discussion would occasionally turn to our church building and the feasibility of constructing an accessibility ramp, the response generally was, “Do we really need it?” But that was a rationalization covering the fact that we didn’t have the money. Thanks be to God that Maddy Hogan’s gift has made it possible. However, the conversations prior to her gift show what happens when money is at the root of our visions.

Making do will undo us. Every vision needs to be sparked by what we can do when we say, “We will, with God’s help”!

Saint Luke’s future is not about *less*, but *more*. If we have labored for the good in constructing a barrier-free entrance so that all may enter our church through our open doors, then shouldn’t we be envisioning lavatory facilities on the main floor? We are experiencing the rejuvenation of ministry with children and youth at Saint Luke’s, and we also have a wonderful history and tradition of community theatre. If we envision the *more*, can’t you see a Summer Arts Theatre Workshop for children, a Choral Camp for the young people of Forest Hills, a week of Vacation Bible School? We now house a child-care center Monday through Friday on the lower level of the parish hall. What about after-school tutoring for older children on the upper level? We can envision Saint Luke’s as a Community Center for children and youth.

All year we have been raising funds for Notre Dame de l’Annonciation school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. We continue today with the Bake Sale, and with Wednesday’s Thanksgiving Pie Pick-up. We can do even more, for Bishop Provenzano has asked all parishes to take up an Advent Offering for rebuilding the Episcopal cathedral in Port-au-Prince that was destroyed by the 2010 earthquake.

Saint Luke’s Church is not going to be undone by making do. Let us pray and plan about what we *can* do when we say, “We will, with God’s help.” We are not “a little parish struggling to get by.” We are members of the Body of Christ – Christ the King – whose praises we sing whenever we gather here together. That song moves us, and moves us out into the streets. Generous in giving, faithful in serving, bold in proclaiming: We will, with God’s help, do the work we have been given to do through a Saint Luke’s that grows more and more into becoming who God needs us to be.

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