

Homily – St. Michael Parish 150th Anniversary

November 20, 2016

Today, on this Feast of Christ the King, the Church stands at the foot of the cross and looks upon its crucified Savior. Today, the special Jubilee Year of Mercy ends – but our firm belief in God’s mercy and compassion does not end! God is full of mercy, compassion, and enduring love for every one of us! Today, we also joyfully celebrate the 150th Anniversary of this parish. Our readings help shape our reflection today.

The first reading tells how King David was chosen as the first shepherd and commander of a united kingdom in ancient Israel. Kings in the ancient Near East often cherished the title of shepherd because they were to take care of the most vulnerable members of the flock – the ewes and the lambs -- widows, orphans, and strangers. When we first meet David in the Bible he is a little shepherd boy, not someone his family would expect to become a great leader. But God chooses whom he will and empowers David to carry out his special ministry as shepherd of God’s people.

Christ the King shows us what it means to be a Good Shepherd. He was willing to lay down his life for his flock, for the community of

faith, for all of us gathered here today. And that is why we stand at the foot of his cross today. His suffering and death sum up his mission. Throughout his public ministry, he was always willing to sacrifice himself – by **healing** one more person even though he was bone tired – by **answering** one more question even though he knew his enemies were setting traps for him – by **sitting at table** with public sinners and tax collectors even though he knew that others were bitterly criticizing him for this – by **standing in solidarity** with the poor and the needy even though others thought that he was very foolish for doing so. When we stand at the cross and look back over Jesus' life, we see that God's love was manifest in Jesus' every word and deed.

Many people have served this parish through the years – priests, women religious, permanent deacons, and many, many lay people – like the Good Shepherd. The task that lies before you is for all of you to continue to serve this community and to go out, to reach out to the vulnerable, the needy, the forgotten, the lost, the neglected, the unwanted. Be compassionate like our heavenly Father. Proclaim the Lord Jesus and his gospel in word and deed. Our Lady of Guadalupe will accompany you in your common ministry.