

Welcome the Reign of Christ here and in our own hearts.

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Christ the King / Reign of Christ B – 2 Sam 23 1-7, Ps 132 1-12, Rev 1 4B-8, Jn 18 33-37

If you haven't read the Harry Potter books yet, you're missing out on one of the great English-language Christian epics of the past century. The central setting in the stories is the British boarding school for witchcraft and wizardry, Hogwarts. The Headmaster, Professor Dumbledore, has a particular gift for making his school one where the most unlikely people can have a place to call home. There are several incompetent staff and some very unpleasant members of the community, some quite psychotic. Yet they all remain unquestionably part of the community. Dumbledore resists all efforts by people to have any of these troubled ones ejected from the community. In time, their true gifts and qualities are revealed, and Dumbledore's bewildering loyalty to them is vindicated.

It's an image of the Reign of Christ as it might be on Earth. The reign of Christ is not a democracy, but it's a community where every individual is accorded the courtesy and presumption of belonging; a community where lasting judgement is suspended in favour of patience and mercy. It's no utopia; humans are human; people get hurt; people are ill-treated and misunderstood by one another. But no-one is outside as far as Jesus is concerned; and anyone who tries to give that impression doesn't understand the way things work in the Realm of Christ.

It's very appropriate that we'll hold the annual general meeting of St John's Youth Services on this Christ the King Sunday. St John's Youth Services is an organisation whose

reason for existing is to proclaim by word and deed that every young person is worth believing in, and to see that every young person might safely call somewhere home. It's an ethos that springs directly from the values of the Reign of Christ. Jesus has a very special care for young people; a particular concern that they should never stumble into a barrier that suggests they don't have a place of their own; a particular concern that they encounter his care for them as a gateway to abundant life.

St John's Youth Services sprang from this parish – its basic ethos expresses the values that the people of this parish share with the whole Christian community. We seek to embody the Reign of Christ by asserting that everyone belongs under the protection of Jesus. We try to do this because Jesus wants us to go out of our way to make sure everyone does belong.

A lot of us people have trouble belonging in the wider world because of where we come from – what race or country or educational background we come from, what emotional baggage we bring with us.

But in Christian communities, living under the reign of Jesus, we seek to live the fundamental truth that he wants us all to know we belong. We might have trouble belonging in the wider world, because of our age, or because we're too sick, or we're a bit different. But in this and in any Christian community, we seek to live the truth that Jesus wants us all to belong. Jesus is King here; Jesus is in charge – and he's not someone who's influenced by bigotry or jealousy or ambition or rivalry or selfishness or concern with prestige. He calls his communities to be places where everyone is safe from those poisons.

It's something that's learned slowly – this belonging; something that has to be passed down the generations; something that has to become quite natural. We need to pray that anyone who encounters this belonging among the community

of Christ will be protected from our sharp edges – they'll always be there – sharp edges caused by our own frailties and insecurities. But then Jesus experienced them from us too. Today's gospel reading has him on trial precisely because of those insecurities and frailties in his community.

I believe we've been offered a vision today which can help us welcome the Reign of Christ in this place and in our own hearts. Everyone has an image of the effect a true leader can have. God gave King David just such a vision on his death bed; a true, Godly leader – *One who rules over people justly, ruling in reverence for God, ⁴ is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land.* ^{2 Sam 23.3-4}

Can people in this community experience such contentment – as though we arrive to *the light of morning, ... the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land* .

On this Christ the King Sunday, I pray for a communal vision that we and all who come to this, or any Christian community, are always greeted by Christ's blessing, and always feel at home and at one in this place of frailty, contentment, struggle and love. Amen