(deep breath)

Some of you expressed to me a desire, last Sunday, to have a message that addressed the new found realities of our world, the world post November 8th, the world of our newly elected leaders. And though I didn’t engage all of you in such a manner the truth was and is, that I needed a bit of a breath. And so I welcomed our focus last Sunday, a focus on the gifts the way in which God has been shared, been made real, the way the Good News has gone forth through our own Godly efforts in the past year. But today is different, and today we come to our world on Christ the King Sunday.

Christ the King Sunday as far as feast Sunday’s go is a relatively new one, for us. It is only about 100 years old. It emerged from Pope Pious the XI who saw a crisis in the world. It was just after WWI, there was rampant optimism that the war to end all wars as it was known, would now signal a new age of everything and anything to now begin. But Pope Pious saw things differently.

First he saw that much of the optimism of the world was largely self-centered, meaning not just that it was individual, but that it was focused on human capabilities alone. He recognized that a great void of leadership that existed in the world at the time, there were especially very few who were truly looking toward God in Christ for leadership. He said that only once we finally recognize in both our private and in our public life, that Christ is the supreme Ruler, its only then that society will at last receive the great blessings of true liberty, well-ordered discipline, with lasting peace and harmony. He further said “If princes and magistrates (and we could add governors, senators, congressmen/women and Presidents) only if those who are duly elected are filled with the persuasion that they rule, not by their own right or might, but by the mandate and in the place of the Divine King, its only then that they will exercise their authority wisely, and they will make laws and administer them, having in view the common good and human dignity of all their subjects.”

Second Pope Pius XI saw that the self-centeredness which had gripped societies around the world was focused on leaving behind those deemed to be unworthy, which was quite simply not Christlike. About this he said “If we ordain that the whole faithful world should revere Christ as King, we shall minister to the needs of the present day, and at the same time provide an excellent remedy for the plague which now infects society.” And further that “the faithful should understand that it behooves them ever to fight courageously under the banner of Reign of their God in Christ, in such a manner that they would strive to win over to their Lord the hearts that are bitter and estranged from God” Or in other words that we the faithful should be reminded that Christ is our King and we thus live in the reign of God, and as such we are to work to see God’s grace and reign reflected in the world especially within the lives of those who are most estranged, most victimized, most pained in our world.

And finally he saw that even though you and I may day in and day out, live our own individual lives recognizing that Christ is our King. He saw that we need to do that together, as one and that the whole church, Priests, Nuns, and the laity needed to recognize, celebrate, live together in worship as they celebrated Christ their King. That there was something so important about living into this reality as the body of Christ, as the gathering of the faithful, in a common experience, that we needed to devote an entire Sunday to it. It wasn’t enough to just affirm this reality in our personal lives, we needed to celebrate it together.

As it turns out Pope Pious recognized something that was both true of his time and of times past. His time would lead into rampant individualism and grasps for power. The world would go roaring into the 1920’s living as if there were no restraints or guidance needed for life other than the almighty dollar. But it would end of course, with the crash and depression of the 1930’s. Meanwhile in other parts of the world those that quested after power would seize it with devastating realities for those who were most impoverished or least to blame – the 6 million and many more Jews and others of Europe are painful memories, to say the least, of that.

But it wasn’t just his time as I said, it was also of the past. The world of Jeremiah, our lesson for this morning reflects these realities as well. There Jeremiah bemoans the false shepherds that have led the people astray. They have driven away, he says, God’s people. And elsewhere the people Jeremiah has served are found to be wanting in their faith. They did not and would not remember God’s story. God brought them into a land of plenty with fruits and good things but they defiled the land and made God’s heritage an abomination. And the priests, Jeremiah reports, failed too. Those who handled the law did not know the Lord and went after false prophets that would never satisfy. And so Jeremiah reports that the days are surely coming, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, one who will reign as king and deal wisely, one who will execute justice and righteousness in the land. And he will be known by his name – The Lord is righteousness.

And so today we remember that the Lord is our righteousness. That the people we were before November 8th is the people we are today. And our responsibility, response, living as God’s people does not change because of one election or another. We still live with the invitations to remember Christ as our King. We still live with the challenge to live for those who are broken and in pain – whether are Americans or not. We still live with the call to go forth in the world in Jesus name – not as a Democrat or a Republican. We still live with the clarion call to work for the least of these, live for the other, welcome in the outcast and despised, the poor, the orphan and the widow of our time and to work for just policies to accomplish all these things. We still live, are to truly live as people gathered together in Christ’s name and no other and if in Christ’s name we are brought into accord with those duly elected so be it and if we are brought into conflict, into disagreement with those elected because God’s love in Christ is being ignored for some or for all then we must live for that because it is to that which we are held accountable.

Christ the King. Reign of Christ Sunday. A Sunday to remember the gift of God in Christ being one that unites, calls and shapes who we are. Of the many ways to name the similarities between our time today and that of Pope Pious 100 years ago or Jerimiah about 2700 years ago that is the one that does not and will not change. God is our faithful and just ruler and the reality of being God’s people, of living true to God’s covenant should not be entrusted, cannot be based, will not have as its true foundation anything other than God’s revealed love to whole world.