

## Pastoral Reflection for November 20th Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

At St. Cronan, we have reclaimed the Solemnity of Christ the King as that of Christ the Healer. The readings today give us much to mull over regarding power dynamics, and it is worth reflecting on the reasons we at St. Cronan may have renamed this tradition.

The imagery of Christ the King invokes deep cultural conditioning around power. In many circles today, “power” can be akin to a dirty word, and any inkling of a power differential in a given dynamic can lead to rebuke and condemnation. This is understandable as, in our current cultural climate, when we think of power, we think of “power-over” as opposed to alternative ways of exercising power. “Power-over” is just what it sounds like: power built on domination and control, and it is often wielded to subjugate and disempower others.

This is not the only kind of power possible, however, and it is certainly not the kind of power that Jesus wields. As exemplified in today’s Gospel, Jesus’s power is a generative, collaborative power that is founded in relationship and in the treatment of others as equals. This kind of power is “power-with.” When Jesus turns to the second thief and proclaims, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise,” he is providing a resounding example of the sort of power that invites others in and that comes from meeting another where they are. This kind of power empowers *all* of us, not just a select few.

One of the key differences in these two types of power is that “power-over” grows out of a sense of scarcity, whereas “power-with” grows out of a sense of abundance. When we find ourselves tempted to exercise “power-over,” we are coming from a place where we believe that there is not enough power to go around. However, when we believe that there is enough power to be shared, we are able to practice “power-with.” We do not feel threatened or disempowered by sharing power with others. In fact, once we are able to step into this kind of generative power, we are able to participate in the overflowing, abundant nature of God’s grace, which is never exhausted and ever-increasing.

This kind of power is healing; it can heal relational wounds, and it can heal the wounds we have in ourselves from when power has been used to hurt us. And thus we celebrate The Feast of Christ the Healer.

—Loren Barnes Gaillardetz