

**Pastoral Reflection for November 21st**  
**For the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**

The story goes that there was once a king whose ascendancy to the throne followed the reign of a true despot, one who had built his kingdom on the backs of the poor. The new king wanted to reconcile the painful tension between the throne and the people. He wanted to find a way to ritualize this reconciliation. He called all the people together in his courtyard and told them what he hoped to do -- he wanted to celebrate the transformation of this new reign by coming to the home of the poorest among them, sitting at his or her table and having dinner with him/her. He asked them to choose the person with whom he could complete this ritual, and after some deliberation, they chose a poor widow who was the wife of a deceased coal miner. She lived in a little shack in the woods. Overwhelmed, she asked him to give her two weeks to prepare and then she would invite him to dinner.

Two weeks came and went, and there was no invitation. He sent a messenger to her home to ask her about his dinner invitation but she was never there. He instructed them to hide near her home and follow her to see where she was going every day. They came back to report to him that she had gathered the town's people and they were all deep in the woods building a huge castle. "They'll never finish it!" they said, but when it was finished, she planned to invite the king to dinner.

He gathered all the people again and said, "I know what you are doing, and I'm not angry, but I'm deeply disappointed. You have taken from me the possibility of completing this ritual of reconciliation with you. I wanted to be with you where YOU are, but you chose to be with me where you think I am.

Jesus never wanted to be king. It was a title people tried to thrust on him but which he resisted from the first day of his public ministry. He wanted to be one of us, to be with us where we are-- in our fragile and scandal-filled church, in our sometimes chaotic homes, and with our flawed but loving families. Let us invite him to be with us where we are. The king we celebrate today is not a symbol of power and status but a compassionate and caring brother, one we have come to celebrate at St. Cronan each year at this time as Christ the HEALER.

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