Following Christ Above all Things
Fr. Herman Homily - June 7, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christ is among us. >> He is and ever shall be.

The title of today's message is “Following Christ Above all Things.” On this day, we celebrate the Sunday of all Saints. Now, in this Gospel reading, we have two distinct passages from the Gospel of Matthew that are combined in one reading. One section is from chapter 10 and the other section is from chapter 19 (10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30). But both of these texts serve a as a singular decree to the Disciples and to all who are called into the service of the King. We often mistake the saints for heroes of personal virtue. But the scriptural reality is that they are a functional remnant. Those who have been conquered by the Word of God and transformed into its heralds. its proclaimers, its witnesses. For them to follow Christ was not a spiritual journey in the modern sense, but a total submission to the divine pedagogy, the divine school mastery that dismantles the human ego and all earthly attachments. Today I'd like to look with you at three aspects of this reading. The **first** is that the judgment is the judgment of the King versus the opinion of the world. And the **second** is the surrender of the household to the Kingdom. And then **finally** the pedagogy of the cross and the reversal of status.

First of all, the judgment of the King versus the opinion of the world. Our Lord says, "Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my father who is in heaven.” Acknowledging Christ is not a private mental state. It is a public functional practical alignment with the King's decree. We must recognize there is only one land owner and we are his tenants. The men mentioned in the text of the Gospel represent the police that is the human city with its own laws, its own values and its own forms of justice. Now to acknowledge the true King before the city is to declare that the city’s authority is null and void. The Saints were those who accepted being shamed by the world because they spoke a language the world did not authorize. We are constantly in our modern age tempted to seek acceptance within the human city. We want to be seen as good people by the standards of our society. But the Gospel demands that we fear the land owner more than the other tenants. Every day we face a choice. Will we

function as heralds of the King's word or will we mute that Word to maintain our standing in the eyes of this world?

Now when the King's word becomes the sole authority in our lives, it necessarily disrupts every other earthly loyalty we hold dear. Which leads to the **second** point, the surrender of the household to the Kingdom. Our Lord continues in this reading, "He who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." The ecos that is the household or family is the primary unit of human security and identity. Christ is not here merely reordering our priorities. He is demanding the total surrender of the household to the βασίλειο (vasíleio) that is the kingdom. Now loyalty to this King must supersede the natural bonds of blood. The Saints were those who were willing to be orphans for the sake of the instruction which God gave. If our loyalty to family or culture provides a sense of rightness that is independent of the Gospel, we have made an idol out of the household or out of the culture. The temptation for us today is to allow family expectations or cultural values to dictate our path and our manner of living in this world.

We often use family as an excuse to avoid the radical demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But Christ calls us to a loyalty that breaks these natural bonds.

When the King stands first, the household is no longer a place of self-interest but a sight of service to the Word of God and to the proclamation of the kingdom as its witnesses. Now surrendering our earthly identities leads directly to a very difficult requirement of the King and in fact the most difficult requirement of the King and that is the call to carry the instrument of our own execution.

We learn now and lean on the teaching about the pedagogy of the cross and the reversal of status which it brings. Jesus said, "He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Peter responded to this, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What shall we have?" Now recognize and be very careful to accept that this cross is not a burden or a personal struggle. It is the instrument of the execution of the human ego. To take the cross is to accept that in the eyes of the world's power structures, you are dead.

You are dead.

Which means you cannot be used by them because you are the tool not of this world but of the Kingdom and you are alive only to him in order to be his instrument. Peter's question reveals that he is still thinking like a mercenary

looking for a reward. And now Jesus answer regarding inheriting eternal life is a literary reversal. He's turning the tables on Peter. He says the first, those who hold power, wealth, and status in this age are revealed as the last because they are useless to the King. The last, the Apostles and the Martyrs and all the Saints are first because they are the only ones who actually carried the message of Jesus Christ. They were the only useful ones. **Fools** according to Proverbs are useless like a saw that's not sharp or salt that has lost its saltiness. Every Christian, every believer is called to this execution. It may manifest as the loss of status, the sacrifice of career, or the endurance of rejection. Whatever form it takes, we must bear it as a sign that we belong to a different Kingdom. We follow a different set of rules. And we must trust that the reversal promised by Christ is the only reality that matters regardless of how last we appear to be in this present age. By embracing this reversal, by carrying the cross, we move from the standard of this world to the functional practical reality of the kingdom of God and we become useful.

Now in today's Gospel, we briefly mention three aspects. One, the judgment of the king versus the opinion of the world. Second, the surrender of the household to the Kingdom. And then finally, the pedagogy of the cross and the reversal of status. This is the path walked by the Saints. They did not decide to be holy. They were captured by the King's decree and functioned as his heralds. They placed the Word above every earthly attachment and carried their crosses to the end. The same call is given to us today.

We should seek the approval of the Land Owner rather than the praise of the city or the other tenants. Let us place the Kingdom above the household and follow the King with confidence that his word is the final authority over all of our life. May this be our perspective here in Lewes, Delaware, the St. Andrews Orthodox Church.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Help us, save us, have mercy upon us, and keep us, oh God, by thy grace

Link to Sermon - https://youtu.be/mHxQT6OI9zY?t=5103