

## **Father Philip's Address to St Paul's Assembly**

**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November**  
**Theme for the week: Christ the King**

**John 18:33-37**

People often talk about Australia being 'upside down' because it is (where we see it on a map or a globe) at the bottom of the world.

I can confirm, as can the many of you who have been here, that if you do visit there you are not likely to fall off the earth!

There is, however, the saying about our world being turned upside down. It simply means that something has happened in our life that upsets us or makes us very upset or confused and we feel that everything around us has fallen apart. We feel that things will never be the same again.

The birth of Jesus some two thousand years ago was a bit like that. Those who were expecting that the Messiah, the Son of God would be an earthly king who would rule on earth and make everything right with a wave of his hand would be very disappointed.

While King Herod lived in the glorious splendour of his palace. Jesus was born in a simple cave because there was not even any room for them at the inn.

The site of the birth of Jesus is now covered with a very old and large Church and highly decorated, it is this simple cave deep underground where Jesus, the King of the Universe was born. A far cry from the palace of King Herod.

At nearly every moment in the life of Jesus, he did things which were not expected. He turned the ideas of what people thought the Messiah should be like 'upside down'.

- John the Baptist expected Jesus to baptise him, but instead John was baptised by Jesus.
- When Jesus entered Jerusalem before his last week on earth, many expected him to enter with a great army. Instead he entered riding a simple and humble donkey.
- People expected that Jesus would be someone who would only spend time with those who were 'good' and 'perfect'. But instead he mixed with sinners.
- People expected that Jesus would judge. But instead they found that he gave forgiveness.
- When Jesus went to supper with his disciples, he washed their feet. Peter insisted that it should be the other way around – he expected that he would serve Jesus. Instead, Jesus knelt down and washed their feet.
- Some expected that the Messiah would bring about a revolution and get the Romans out of Jerusalem. Instead he was arrested and killed like a criminal.

Jesus turned people's expectations upside down in so many ways, including the way in which he shows Kingship, how he is a King.

Our world expects a King to be crowned with a glorious crown filled with precious jewels. Instead, Jesus was crowned with a Crown of thorns as the soldiers mocked him.

Jesus turns 'upside down' our idea of Kingship and Kingdoms and what a King is. As we heard in today's Bible reading he said:

My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.

"My kingdom is not of this world". The kingdom of Jesus is nothing like we would expect. It turns upside down what this world considers is important.

The kingdom of Jesus is one in which we look not to be served, but to serve. Just as Jesus knelt down and washed his disciples feet, we are called to wash one another's feet. Not just literally, but we are called to serve and to reach out to the poor, the lonely, the sick, the prisoners and all who are forgotten or hated by society.

Each year on Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, priests and bishops all around the world at the Eucharist in the evening wash the feet of twelve men. This picture shows the last Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury doing so in his Cathedral. In this act during the worship of the Church, we are reminded that we are all called to humble ourselves and serve others.



This next picture is of Pope Francis also washing the feet on Maundy Thursday. Some people were shocked that he chose to go into a prison and wash the feet of prisoners and drug addicts.

Some people were shocked. But the Christian should not be shocked. This is exactly what Jesus calls us to do. To turn the world upside down. To reach out to those in need.

What can we do?

Well firstly we can show our support of those who are marginalised. For all who are sick or forgotten or treated differently. One example is tomorrow when the Youth Red Cross will be distributing the red ribbons to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS – the 1<sup>st</sup> December is World Aids Day. In a small and simple way, wearing that ribbon shows support of those with HIV and AIDS.

Secondly, we can get involved actively with causes and outreach. There are many ways here at St Paul's in which that can be done. The Service part of the OLE page on our website lists a number of types of community service in which St Paul's is involved.

If you are involved in a Church, they will also often have programmes and involvement in outreach and service.

Next week we will be having a food drive for the Philippines here at St Paul's. The response of over \$21,000 towards the Archbishop's appeal was a fantastic result. But it is also good to be involved in doing physical and practical things. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week we will have boxes at both entrances in which you can place cans of food, water bottles, rice and noodles which will be sent to the Philippines through the Mission to Migrant Workers. It will help towards providing an important response to the need of the many people caught up in the result of the recent Typhoon.

As we think of the Kingdom of Christ, let us remember that this is not an earthly Kingdom, but one which is quite different, in which service and outreach to those in need is a priority. When we pray the Lord's Prayer each day we pray that God's Kingdom may be built up here on earth – a Kingdom of love, justice and peace. But WE are the people who need to build it.

Yes, Christ the King is no ordinary King. He is a King who has turned Kingship upside down.

I want to leave you with an image in art of Christ as King.

Some of you have been to London, and will no doubt have been to Trafalgar Square. Around the square are large statues of military leaders, kings and at the centre of the square is an enormous column on which stands a statue of Nelson.

But for many years there has been an empty plinth with no statue. For a long time nobody knew what should go there – a General, a King? In the end it was decided to have different pieces of art placed there from time to time.

In the year 2000, when we celebrated two thousand years since the birth of Christ, it was decided to put a statue of Jesus there. But the artist decided he did not want to put a large impressive statue of Jesus like an earthly King. Instead he wanted to show the humility of Jesus. He wanted to turn upside down what people expected.

This is the statue he made, a simple white alabaster statue with a gold crown of thorns. Not large, just life size, and so it would look very small in the large square surrounded by the enormous statues.

It is difficult to find a photograph which really shows you how small that statue looked in the vast space. But I did see it there, and it made an incredibly strong artistic – but also religious statement about Jesus.



Here was a statue of the man, the King. Not a King with palaces and riches, but a small humble man, who many people hated and despised, and eventually killed.

In the shadow of the greatness, the statue of Jesus stood there as a bold message to say “My kingdom is not of this world ... my kingdom is from another place”.

May Jesus Christ be King of our hearts and lives and may we serve him as we serve others.