One day a priest and a deacon were standing by the side of the road outside their parish holding up signs that said, “THE END IS NEAR! Turn yourself around NOW before it’s too late!” They weren’t holding the sign too long before a car sped by with the driver yelling out to the two clergy, “Mind your own business you religious fanatics!” The two clergy were disappointed and disheartened that their message was viewed with such anger and hostility. After all, they were only trying to save people. Then suddenly, they heard the screeching of tires and a loud splash. They looked at each other and the deacon said to the priest, “Maybe we should have been more clear about the bridge being washed out?”

Did you ever wonder why we hear these readings about the end of time at this time of the year? Why is this? The reason is that today we are ending the liturgical year and preparing for the new one as we celebrate the Kingship of Christ whose victory will be complete at the end of time. These readings represent the fullness or the completeness of our salvation history and uniquely come full circle at this time of year in our liturgical celebration. They also help us to see that all that Christ did and taught in the scriptures that lead us to eternal life are meant to come to fulfillment at the end of time. Likewise, the apocalyptic readings we will hear again next week are meant to help us see that the second and final coming of Christ is necessarily linked to the first coming of Christ into the world in His incarnation. They are stories building throughout the scriptures that portend the everlasting life to come. They remind us that God has already broken into our world in the birth of Christ when God became man, and that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit now dwell together in their Glory in heaven. Therefore, this Feast that we celebrate today is itself a bridge that links the past with the present and the future and the future back to the past all revolving in our ongoing liturgical cycle around Christ our King.
Therefore, the Kingship of Christ is not several events but in fact ONE continuous event that we and all who have come before us and will come after us, belong to.

This Feast is one of celebration and that is why we wear white today, because this day celebrates the eternal kingship of Christ and the promised victory of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in Salvation History. It is a chance to see the entire plan of God’s salvation in context as well as in its entirety and in its eternity. In addition, since today marks the end of this liturgical year and the BEGINNING of another it is a great opportunity for us to reflect on all that has happened in our lives over the last year in terms of our faith as well as a chance to make some changes for the liturgical year to come. To bridge the gap if you will of our short comings with a chance at renewal or a bridge from what is good to what can be even better. Today is a chance for a liturgical and faith-filled, New Year and therefore an opportunity to make a liturgical New Year’s Resolutions!

To do this though I think it is important to think about the liturgical year and its importance. The liturgical year follows distinctive “seasons” like the calendar year but instead of four we have six. The purpose of these seasons is to guide us through the mysteries of Christ and salvation history in the celebration of the Mass and prayers of the Church. The seasons of the Christmas and Easter commemorate and sum-up the ultimate Truths of salvation history: God entered into human history in the person of Jesus Christ in the Incarnation we celebrate during Christmas in order to redeem us through his Suffering and Death that we commemorate during the Paschal Triduum and the Resurrection we celebrate during Easter. These seasons are preceded by the penitential seasons of Advent and Lent respectively so we can prepare ourselves to hear the Truth that these mysteries reveal. Ordinary time which comes from the Latin word “ordo” meaning “to order” moves us through the year and brings order to the other seasons by tying together Christ’s teaching within the context of the story of God’s people. Likewise, within these seasons we commemorate various aspects in the lives Mary and the saints as role models of discipleship in Christ in order to inspire us to do the same.

So what does all this have to do with the Solemnity of Christ the King? As I said before, today is a bridge from one year to another and the only way to understand Christ’s Kingship is to reflect on the story of
Christ in its entirety. In our Gospel today, which we hear every year on Good Friday during the Triduum, Pilate tries to understand the Kingship of Jesus in terms of his understanding of earthly kings and kingdoms. Jesus clearly doesn’t fit this understanding! Likewise, Jesus is handed over to Pilate by his own people who fail to believe that he is the one promised. Jesus clearly didn’t fit their understanding of their promised king and Messiah. In both cases there is a tension between expectation and the Truth. Jesus came to “testify to the truth” and everyone who “listens to his voice” “belongs to the truth,” he says. And the TRUTH is that Jesus’ kingdom is not OF this world but came INTO this world to be the bridge to His kingdom.

The truth about Christ is that his kingship is eternal: existing before creation; foretold in the Old Testament; manifested in the incarnation; fulfilled in his life, death, resurrection and ascension and culminating in his second coming when his kingdom will reign in completion, for eternity. This is the truth of our faith and this truth unfolds before us as we journey through the liturgical year. This is why as we transition from one liturgical year, from one season, from one week to another we should evaluate the extent to which we belong to the truth. We should take the time to see how each of these seasons and weeks within the seasons, are connected and what they tell us about Christ’s Kingdom and our role in it. It is important for us all to realize that the truth about Christ the King is revealed to us through this interconnection, rhythm and cycle that is the liturgical year for He is the bridge that makes the connections.

How did Advent impact your Christmas last year? How did your Advent and Christmas prepare you for Lent and Easter? What do they have in common and how are they connected? Is Ordinary time really ordinary? Reflecting on these questions honestly at this time of transition can be very helpful in preparing ourselves for the beginning of this year’s cycle of God’s revelation which begins next week with Advent. Asking ourselves these questions might also help us hear the voice of Christ that harkens to us and prepares us for his eventual Second Coming so that instead of facing the doom of the end of times, we might find courage and strength as faithful followers belonging to the truth as loyal subjects of Christ the King.