

Feast of Christ the King      11-21-10

[After introductory remarks about the Lourdes Water, "gratitude loops," receptions after Masses, etc] It seems a bit odd, doesn't it, that as we celebrate this first anniversary of our new church, Jesus hangs crucified on a cross? Three men were executed that first Good Friday. We know from the gospels that Mary, the mother of Jesus was there. But perhaps the other two mothers watch also. One perhaps cursed as her son cursed and taunted Jesus.

But the other criminal—usually he is called Dismas--gasped with his dying breaths, "Jesus, remember me. Jesus, remember me. Jesus, remember me!" And that man's mother, perhaps standing next to Mary, wept tears of joy for her dying son.

Because she had prayed for Dismas when he was a boy and began to get into trouble, to take things, to be nasty. She would take that little child, hug him and say, "Dismas, you are doing some bad things; but I love you and I know that you are good under all this." When Dismas became a youth and began to get into fights, do damage, hurt people, that mother didn't give up on him, but still prayed every day for him. She said, "Son, people are angry with you. You are going the wrong direction. But you will always be my son, and I will always believe that inside, there is good in you.

And when he killed a man in a fit of rage, when the whole village turned against Dismas, that mother still loved him still, still believed he could turn his life around. And she still prayed constantly

for her son, right up to the Friday when he took up a cross and struggled with Jesus up the hill to his death. God heard that mother's prayer and softened the young man's heart, and at the last possible moment, he prayed: "Jesus, remember me. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." A mother's persistent, trusting prayer made a saint.

I think of Dismas' mother today as we again give thanks for the miracle of this beautiful church. Since 1944, how many mothers—and fathers, and single persons—looked up to heaven and prayed: "O God, you can do all things. We humbly ask you that a new church might be possible. We do not know when or how—but we trust in you." How many rosaries clanged against our old pews, now serving a church in the Caribbean!

On this first anniversary, we continue to pray for St. Bernadette, not for a new church, but for a new commitment to Jesus Christ, and new faithfulness to his kingdom.