

Remember to be in the world, not of the world

written by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor |

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor delivered this homily Nov. 22.

One of the things we do to make sense of complex realities is to use labels. For instance, we say Democrats are liberal and Republicans conservative.

The problem is that labels inevitably distort the truth. Conservative means wanting to conserve the status quo, but the Republicans have lots of things they want to change. And liberal means generous, but the Democrats' pro-abortion position is very ungenerous. Alternate labels would be to call Republicans capitalists because they favor big business and Democrats secularists because they oppose giving moral values the force of law.

And unlike American politics, everything in the Kingdom of God is true, sincere and just.

But again our labels distort because both parties are capitalist and secularist — they simply promote distinct versions of the same secular capitalism that characterizes our entire consumer society and which is the basis of a global economy that Pope Francis has so accurately denounced as often “guided only by ambition for wealth and power,” which harms the weak and the planet.

And for that reason he has called upon world leaders to set aside partisan and ideological interests in the name of “a higher degree of wisdom.” Our two American political parties are similar to each other because both belong to the Kingdom of this world and so both promote policies that are the opposite of what Jesus taught and the Church proclaims.

Throughout the Gospels Jesus proclaims the values of the Kingdom of God, which are very different from those of the kingdom of this world. And what are we told about Jesus' kingship? Three things: 1) it is eternal, 2) it is universal and 3) it is founded on truth.

Earthly governments come and go, but the Kingdom of God is everlasting. Earthly nations have borders, but the Kingdom of God has no limits, be they territorial, linguistic or racial, no boundaries at all. And unlike American politics, everything in the Kingdom of God is true, sincere and just.

In today's Gospel Jesus tells Pilate that unlike the Roman Empire, the Kingdom of God “does not belong to this world.” It is in the world: Jesus “came into the world to testify to the truth,” but it is not of the world.

It is already established: Our second reading from the Book of Revelation says, Jesus “has freed us from our sins by his blood” and “made us into a kingdom.” But it will be fully manifest only on the day of his second coming “amid the clouds in glory” when “every eye will see him.” On that day, in Daniel's words, “all peoples, nations and languages will serve him in an everlasting dominion, a kingship that shall never be destroyed.”

You and I were incorporated into this heavenly Kingdom on the day of our baptism when we

were freed from the power of the Kingdom of this world, from the power of sin and death and given a provisional share in the Kingdom of God.

But that Kingdom will fully manifest in us only if we give ourselves fully to doing God's will, building his Kingdom here and now in the measure that we can. If not, we will lose our place, which is still provisional, in his Kingdom. Remember Judas?