

Homily for The Feast of Christ the King,

by Deacon Chris Domingue

Today is the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time, the last Sunday of our Liturgical Year. It also is a Feast Day, The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Most of us know it as the Feast of Christ the King. This feast day was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI who was concerned about the state of the world in the post-World War I period, a war in which over 9 million soldiers were killed and over 21 million wounded. People seemed to be lost about what had happened and the tense state that was in development. In the early 20s Mussolini marched on Rome and formed a Fascist government. Stalin ruled as the Soviet Dictator. We begin to hear of Adolf Hitler. There was fear, a lack of hope, and feelings of helplessness. So the Feast of Christ the King was established as a reminder to all about who is ultimately and eternally in charge.

But kingship is a bit foreign to the American mindset. We live in a democracy, not a kingdom. We elect our leaders; they

don't descend from a long line of monarchy. Even our vision of king may be skewed. When my girls were younger, we went to see Disney's, "The Lion King," at the theater. The young Simba was on an adventure with Nala and he begins to break out in song about his view of kingship and how as king he will be the mightiest of them all. In the song, "I Just Can't Wait to be King," Simba describes his kingly power will entail looking down on others; having ultimate authority and not having to answer to anyone or take advice from those lower than him; the freedom to do whatever he wishes and always being in the spotlight. Of course, his character was young and naïve and his words exaggerated, but some of those sentiments may not be far from how we think of kings: someone of noble birth with supreme authority and power of those in their charge, able to do whatever they want. To be fair, history does record Monarchs that ruled with justice and service of their people; but how often has history witnessed the devastating result of leaders who took Simba's kind of leadership to the level of utter injustice? Or their power and

dominion to the level of terror and war? Even today we are witnessing that kind of leadership in North Korea, and in the extremist groups of Al Qaeda and ISIS. Look at the last week at Paris, at Mali.

So why would Pope Pius XI want us to reflect on Jesus as King, and not just any king, but King of the Universe? The readings of today all reflect why. It's because Jesus represents a kingship that turns our worldly idea of leadership upside down. His kingship is nonviolent; it is **just** and **peaceful**. His authority is based on the rule of **truth, love** and **mercy**. And his kingdom is present until the end of time. It is present now, even in the current midst of chaos and fear happening in the world around us. To find it we need to look and listen for it. Chaos and fear are terrible distractions; they are not part of the heavenly kingdom.

Today's first reading is from the book of Daniel, where Daniel is the hero, not the writer. Daniel was taken as a young Jew to exile in Babylon. There he had a series of visions. In ancient traditions, visions and dreams were glimpses of divine

revelations. They were very symbolic and the symbols had to be interpreted for anything to make sense. This is also Apocalyptic Literature. To the modern mind reading this can be scary and confusing; but to the ancient people this kind of literature arose out of times of great calamity. The grotesque characters in the visions represented leaders of those who were (or would be) persecuting the people. Ultimately this literary form was a message of hope to an embattled nation. The message: God was in charge no matter what else was happening. He would see things to the end and will vindicate all his people. The reading today though, reveals the triumphant one, like the Son of Man (human form), coming on a cloud (symbol of divinity) who is presented before the Ancient One (The One Eternal God) and is given dominion over the universe which cannot ever be overcome or destroyed. Not revealed to us in this passage is that Daniel prior to this vision, had a vision of 4 beasts (leaders representing kingdoms) that would terrorize the people. Now he reveals that God will triumph and his kingdom will be represented by one who

is of human form. We of course, look back on this Old Testament reading and through our Christian lenses know this to be Jesus Christ.

The reading from the book of Revelation is like Daniel in that it is Apocalyptic in style. This time the persecution is of the early Christians by Rome. Again, it is a reminder for these Christians to stand firm in the faith and to await the fulfillment of God's promises through Jesus despite the persecutions they are going through, even martyrdom. Just as Jesus was a witness to the faith unto his death; he conquered death through his resurrection and ascended to the heavenly kingdom where he became king over all. This was done in LOVE to free us from the bonds of sin and death. Those who stay true to him will arise with him to the everlasting kingdom. They will be made into a priestly kingdom glorifying the Father for ever. This reading tells us that when Jesus does come again it will be understood that judgement is at hand. Everyone who ever lived, whether they knew of Jesus or

not, whether they denied him or accepted him, will know who he is when he comes.

This is pretty important stuff. We should be thinking about the everlasting kingdom because our lives today are only temporary. C.S. Lewis wrote something about the eternal kingdom in his book, Mere Christianity:

If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did the most for this present world were just those who thought the most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”

Lewis is telling us that we become powerful witnesses for Christ when our focus is on the future kingdom. However, when our focus is not on the heavenly kingdom, our Christian witness is lost.

But it is the Gospel reading that ties everything together about Jesus and his kingdom. Pilate, unwittingly through his line of questioning reveals who Jesus is. And Jesus, through his

answers gives every possibility for Pilate to recognize him, but Pilate never does. Jesus never comes out and directly says, “I am King.” To do so would justify Pilate’s actions as leader of the Roman occupation in Jerusalem. Instead Jesus speaks of a kingdom that does not belong to this world. His kingdom, basically, is one that did not originate here or belonged to an earthly establishment. If read carefully, Jesus never said that his kingdom is not in this world. Think back to all the Gospels when Jesus began his public ministry. He proclaimed, “The kingdom of God is at hand.” With the coming of Jesus is the coming of the kingdom. The final words Jesus speaks in today’s Gospel reading reveal the foundation of his kingdom, TRUTH. This is why Jesus came, to testify to the Truth. In preparation for this homily, I came across a statement from one of my sources. “Truth is not a something, it’s a someone.” A relationship with the Truth is a relationship in Jesus Christ. In that relationship we follow and imitate him. We are to become witnesses to the TRUTH in our everyday lives. In this chaotic world, we like the

people at the time of Daniel and the time of Revelation, are to hold on to the truth to the end of our lives. They, like us, lived in a time of fear and uncertainty, but our truth is Jesus, King of the Universe. Jesus says, “Everyone who belongs to the truth, listens to my voice.” Are we listening? Or, are we like Pilate listening to the worldly voices and can only muster, “what is truth?” Focus on Him, not the chaos and terror tactics that are trying to separate us from the knowledge of God as truth. Jesus will lead us to the everlasting kingdom of life.

I wanted to close with a Korean prayer written by an unknown author that was quoted by James A. Wallace in a book titled, Lift up Your Hearts:

*From the cowardice that dare not face the truth,
From the laziness that is contented with half-truth,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
Good Lord, deliver us.
To the truth that makes us free,
To the truth that helps us see,*

*To the truth that makes its home in thee,
Good Lord, deliver us.*