

Christ the King - 2018

Daniel 7:13-14; Rev 1:5-8; John 18:33b-37

Mass Reflection:

After we have professed the faith together and offered prayers to God as the Body of Christ we leave the Liturgy of the Word and move to the Liturgy of the Eucharist. After having petitioned God asking for our needs and those of the world we now make offering to God. In this time we offer a portion of our material goods in the form of money to both support the ongoing activity of the church and to increase our faith in God by parting with some of that which we find so valuable. This has been done since the earliest days of the church - check out the Acts of the Apostles. The other ancient offering is to offer the bread and wine to be transformed into Jesus' Body and Blood so we can participate in Jesus' sacrifice. We also can add into the offering our own sacrifice as we place into the bread and wine our own struggles, joys, sufferings, trials, and successes. This portion that we add is symbolized by the small bit of water added to the chalice, as our gifts as part of the Body of Christ, blend into Christ's own sacrifice and become part of that great sacrifice - a chance for our struggles to become part of a greater sacrifice of the Body that brings greater blessings to the world. As the gifts are collected and prepared we can think of how much we have from God and how much we can offer back.

Homily:

In today's Gospel Jesus says to Pilate: *My kingdom does not belong to this world ... You say I am a king ... for this I was born and came into the world, to testify to the truth.* When he says his kingdom does not "belong to this world" he is not saying that it is somewhere else, but that it is something different than we understand earthy kingdoms to be. St. John Chrysostom said: "He [has] his empire from above ... He [showed] the weakness of kingship among us, that its strength lies in servants; but that which is above ... [needs] nothing." Pilate was right, Jesus is a king, and that kingdom works differently than the kingdoms we ourselves set up.

Jesus is the one spoken of in the first reading, he is: *The one like a Son of man [who] received dominion, glory, and kingship ... his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.* In case there is any doubt of the one of whom the prophet speaks, we hear in the second reading plainly: *Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.* If Jesus is king of the whole earth (and in fact the whole universe) then that makes us his subjects - but we seem to be free to ignore the rules of this king or deny his kingship - how come we can do that (not what you

usually expect from a king who is being ignored). Jesus doesn't act like an earthly king would with subjects who are living in the kingdom and not caring that he is the king. Subjects like us who think that we run the place and can do whatever we want. An earthly king would swoop in with armies and put everyone straight. An earthly king would have a media campaign to brainwash the people, and would use the arms of government to enforce his rule. This is what earthly kings need to do, since their power comes from the ability of their servants to enforce their rule. Our king Jesus has complete confidence in his power. Christ doesn't lack the power to enforce his rule himself, and one day he will arrive in all that power to take full possession of the kingdom. We need to consider what it will be like to face him at our death. We each need to ask ourselves each day: what will I do as his subject while the king is away?

Will I follow the law of God out of love for God, out of respect for a king who is also a loving parent, out of a greater love for God's other children? Will I realize the great gifts to be had in sacrificing for God and others and how this action helps to bring God's kingdom of peace to the world? We won't be able to stand before the king on our last day and expect it the way it is now - reality will set in, Jesus will look into our hearts to see if we are truly in his kingdom.

In the movie *A Bronx Tale* a young man is speaking to the mafia boss of the neighborhood. The young man is fascinated by the power that this man wields. He asks him a classic question: "Is it better to be loved or feared?" The gangster answers: "I would rather be feared." Eventually his rule of fear is brought to an end by a bullet, and his kingdom collapses. Our great king's answer to this same question is: "I would rather be loved." Jesus wants our service to be our own free choice. With great mercy he does not swoop in with his power to punish every violation of his laws (although he could), with restraint coming from tender love he does not enforce the worship he is due by threats of violence (although he could), he wants us to grow in the same love he has for us, and then to show that same love and mercy to others. We have a great king who is due worship, we have a powerful king who has set down laws to govern the universe he created, we have a loving king who has established rules for our living that benefit us and move us closer to him in love. We are called to freely follow Jesus to the place in his kingdom he prepared for us. Let us all speak from the heart the words in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."