

November 24, 2019

Solemnity of Christ the King

Often times when we come to the end of something, a project at home or at work, a successful sports season, we celebrate. Today, we come to the conclusion of the Liturgical year, this year when we have listened to the Gospel of Luke. Luke whose special focus includes the power and working of the Holy Spirit, the active involvement of both men and women in the events of salvation, the primacy of the poor, the meaning of Jesus's journey to Jerusalem where he suffers and dies on the Cross. We end this Church year with a big, blow-out celebration, the Feast of Christ the King! (5:00 pm and 11:00 am: What a gift to add to our joy with the celebration of the sacrament of baptism today. After the 11:00: Also, a special Eucharistic procession in honor of Christ the King of the Universe.)

We all have our own ideas and impressions of what a King is from what we read or see on television. What is the biblical understanding a king? What does this mean for us in our relationship with Jesus Christ?

First, God alone is the true King of the people of Israel. God called the people of Israel to put their total trust in him rather than in human powers. When the people of Israel insisted upon having a King, God gave them the ideal King, King David. David was an ideal King not because of his own power, but because of his humility. He was the youngest of Jesse's sons, a mere shepherd boy. He knew that his power came from God and even when he forgot and sinned, he repented in humility. In today's reading from 2nd Samuel we hear of David's anointing for the people of Israel. Why do they choose to give him even more responsibility? Because he is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He is one of them, his isn't far beyond them, he is "down to earth." The biblical notion of a true King is one that knows that all power and authority comes from God, the King is the servant of and has flesh and bone bond with the people.

This biblical notion of a King is essential to our understanding of who Jesus Christ is as King and what it means for us to be a part of his Kingdom. In Luke's Gospel the angels announce birth of Jesus, the newborn king to the shepherds tending their sheep, the lowly and forgotten, like David the shepherd boy. Jesus, the Son of God is born as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. David was the one who united the Northern and Southern Tribes of Israel and Jesus is the one who unites

heaven and earth. Jesus fulfills the Biblical understanding of a true and eternal King. His Kingdom is like no other on earth. His throne is his cross. His power and authority come from humble service. By his humble death on the cross. When we humbly acknowledge our sins and give our lives to him, has did the repentant thief on the cross, Jesus will then remember us in his Kingdom. His Kingdom now in our hearts and in our world as well as his Kingdom in life eternal.

When we are baptized we are anointed as was Christ was anointed priest, prophet and king. What does it mean for us to live our baptismal call to share fully in the kingship of Jesus Christ? It means nothing less than to go to the cross. The Gospel of Luke has been drilling that message into our hearts. Every step Jesus takes is on the path to Jerusalem, the place of his crucifixion. Everything that Jesus says and does finds its meaning in the cross. When we go to the cross with Christ our King, we share in his Kingship anytime we die to our false self, our sin, our selfishness, our ego to allow the crucified and risen Lord to have complete reign of our hearts. That is a life-long process. None of us can say that we are all the way there.

Here is an example of the living the humble Kingship of Christ. St. Therese of Lisieux lived a good portion of her short life in the Carmelite convent of Lisieux. One might think that she lived an idyllic life living in community with other holy women. Not so. She had to deal with some difficult personalities. When one of the sisters died, people in the local community sent wreaths including Therese's family. Therese was arranging them around the coffin and a difficult sister complained, "You're well able to put the wreaths sent by your relatives in a prominent place, aren't you? And you put those of the poorer families in the background." To this hurtful remark Therese said, "Thank you sister, you're right. Give me the cross of moss the workers end, and I'll put it in our in front." ("Love that Keeps us Sane" by Marc Foley, p. 41) St. Therese realized that if she protested she would do nothing to change the Sister, and that she herself would become upset and it really was not a big matter.

Don't sweat the small stuff! Christ is King of the Universe; give all things to him!