

Every year I get hung up on Christ's title of King when we get to this day on the calendar. While it seems to be under dispute recently, last time I checked, we live in a democratic society, where for the last few centuries being under the rule of the a King would feel like a ridiculous concept. While we are severely discontented and disillusioned with how our own government works, I think we would still be thrown into a padded room if we suggested that the best course of action would be to throw out what we have now, and go find a King. Our nation was founded on rebellion against a King, "no taxation without representation...etc.". Of course, over the decades we have been fascinated by the same royalty that we rebelled against: Prince Charles and Princess Diana, more recently, William, Kate Middleton, recent scandals with Prince Andrew, the departure of Harry and Megan. There are also a bevy of shows about this topic: Victoria, the Royals, the newly released 4th season of the Crown, satire like the Windsor's. However, this is more indicative of celebrity worship than anything else. That we are so fascinated is even instructive because the monarchy we once feared and fought has become, so foreign to us that its existence is no longer threatening as that true royal power no longer exists.

The use of the title, King and the power that surrounds it, often, instead, makes us think of medieval or fantasy depictions. Hereditary despots, with unbroken family lines, absolute power: oppressing the masses, accumulating opulence and wealth (unfortunately, even in democratic societies, some families have emulated this). If a king of old was beneficent and wise they were the exception not the rule, they were good because they didn't act like a King. That is why it's always interesting to reflect on Christ the King, knowing the baggage it comes with. There are a benevolent kings in fantasy novels: Narnia, Lord of the Rings amongst others, but when we talk about Christ the King, we aren't talking about a fantasy realm, the Kingdom of

God is not a thing for story books. The reign of Christ is supposed to begin here, the Kingdom of God being built now, we are supposed to be striving towards realizing it.

Of course, monarchy is also an ancient notion, and if we were adding this feast on the calendar today, maybe we think it would be called Christ the president, or the Prime Minister, but that's not actually true. This is not an ancient Church Holy day. The title is ancient, but the feast of Christ the King was not on the Church calendar until 1925: long ago for some, but in the eyes of the world, mere minutes. It did not become a first order feast, a solemnity celebrated on the last week of the Church's calendar until 1960 with Pope John XXIII. In 1969, Pope Paul VI very intentionally further emphasized this day. In that decade of upheaval and Cultural Revolution he doubled down on the day by changing its name. No longer is this the Feast of Christ the King: this is now the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Quite a title: and intentionally so.

One thing that we can all agree on, is that the title, is about power, influence, about who is in charge. Throughout the liturgical year, a year that ends this week, we celebrate Advent: the expectation of the Lord's coming, Christmas: the feast of the Incarnation, God coming into the world as one of us. We have gone through Ordinary time where the life, miracles, and teachings of Christ are laid out for us, to incorporate into our lives. Lent: the time of Penance and preparation for the Sacred Triduum, the holy days of Christ's Passion and Death for our sins and the resurrection that offers us the promise of eternal life. That calendar, leads us here to this day: to Christ the King. I think there are two messages to take from the calendar leading us and ending here. The first is: that with all the troubles of the world, with all that we do, and say, our good and bad, our virtues and our sinfulness, this is God's creation, we are God's creation, and to truly be who we are meant to be, we have to recognize this and allow God to rule our hearts

and minds. All the influences of the world, all the powers of this world, in the end amount to nothing. Jesus says his Kingdom is not of this world, because he does not belong to this world. However, this world and all that is in it belongs to God and he will decide what to do with it. It is a good thing that the God we believe in, the God who will judge the sheep and the goats that we read about in the Gospel of Matthew, is good and merciful ...even if it also reminds us to reflect on our faults.

The second message today, is something hard to accept in the moment. It's not always a comfort when we struggle through life: through health issues, financial difficulties, Spiritual abandonment, doubt and uncertainty: pandemics. But, this feast is the ultimate reminder that in the midst of the crosses of this world, of our faults and failings, of our losses and our sufferings... if Christ truly is the King, then no matter what, in the end, the moral of the story is that GOD WINS. It is true that the symbol of God's reign on earth is the cross, but the symbol of his **victory** is the empty tomb. It is the conquering of evil, sin, and death that proves the reign of God. We are called to have faith and hope, we are called to serve each other. At times we fail, at times our actions should number us amongst the goats, the least faithful of the kingdom: but we repent, we cooperate with God's grace, and we choose to not allow the things of this world to reign over us: we **choose** to be disciples of the only one who has ever been or ever could be a true King in the full sense of the word. The one who creates us, who loves us, who redeems us, and whose entire existence is an expression of Love for us. That is what it means for Christ to be King. If that is what we believe, then we should have no hesitation or anxiety in giving praise and thanks as we place our trust in a king.... in Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and our prayer should echo the repentant companion of Christ on the cross: Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.