Dear Friends,

Is the title “Christ the King” relevant in our modern world?

In the middle of St Peter’s square in Rome, there stands a great obelisk. About four and half thousand years old, it originally stood in the temple of the sun in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis. It was bought to Rome by the dreaded Emperor Caligula, and it was set right in the middle of the equally dreaded Circus of Nero, on Vatican Hill. It was in that Circus that St Peter was martyred, and the obelisk may well have been the last thing on this Earth that Peter saw. On top of the obelisk there now stands a cross. In ancient times, there was a gold ball representing, of course, the sun. Now there is a cross however, the cross of Christ, and on the pedestal of the obelisk there are two inscriptions. The first of them is in Latin, “Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat”, which translated means, Christ has conquered, Christ now rules, Christ now reigns supreme. The other inscription is, “The Lion of Judah has conquered.” So here we have the language of victory. Christianity has triumphed by the power of the cross and triumphed over even the greatest power that the ancient world had known, the Roman Empire, and here in the middle of St Peter’s square stands the obelisk bearing those triumphant inscriptions.

With the Feast of Christ the King we conclude the Liturgical Year B and from next Sunday we will begin the New Year C. This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 to celebrate the Jubilee Year and the 16th centenary of the Council of Nicaea. Instituting this feast, Pope Pius XI proclaimed: “Pax Christi in regno Christi” (“The peace of Christ in the reign of Christ”). This feast was established and proclaimed by the Pope to reassert the sovereignty of Christ and the Church over all forms of government and to remind Christians of the fidelity and loyalty we owe to Christ, who by his Incarnation and sacrificial death on the cross has made us both adopted children of God and future citizens and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Gerald Darring from the St. Louis University has this wonderful explanation of what ‘Kingdom of God’ is: “The Kingdom of God is a space. It exists in every home where parents and children love each other. It exists in every region and country that cares for its weak and vulnerable. It exists in every parish that reaches out to the needy. The Kingdom of God is a time. It happens whenever someone feeds a hungry person, or shelters a homeless person, or shows care to a neglected person. It happens whenever we overturn an unjust law, or correct an injustice, or avert a war. It happens whenever people join in the struggle to overcome poverty, to erase ignorance, to pass on the Faith. The Kingdom of God is in the past (in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth); it is in the present (in the work of the Church and in the efforts of many others to create a world of goodness and justice); it is in the future (reaching its completion in the age to come). The Kingdom of God is a condition. Its symptoms are love, justice, and peace. Jesus Christ is king! We pray today that God may free all the world to rejoice in His peace, to glory in His justice, to live in His love.”

Be blessed,
Fr. Tom Kunnel C.O.
WORSHIP & MEDITATION

MORE TO COME

FIRST READING
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed. (Dn 7:14)

PSALM
The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty. (Ps 93)

SECOND READING
To him who loves us and has freed us
from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, priests
for his God and Father,
to him be glory and power forever and ever.
(Rv 1:5-6)

GOSPEL
So Pilate said to him, “Then you are a king?”
Jesus answered, “You say I am a king.” (Jn 18:37)


GOSPEL MEDITATION
Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

We often come to life expecting all of the pieces of the puzzle to nicely fit together. We want and expect harmony, order, and fairness, the achievement of rewards for good behavior, good health, and happiness. We can more easily accept death when it comes naturally after a good long life, but have a real difficulty comprehending the meaning of it all when it is cut short. Willing to put in a good measure of effort, we desire positive results. When things go wrong and life gets hurtful, unjust, and downright ugly, we become unsettled and can quickly fall into despair. This is especially true if we are people of faith who believe in a God who sees things on our terms and works in favor of our life agenda. What happens to our faith when we find ourselves sitting in a mess?

Does it help to know that God understands and that hardship, failure, disappointment, injustice, confusion, and all of life’s ugliness do not make faith irrelevant or irrational? God is wonderfully and surprisingly creative! He turns the tables on not only our understanding of life, but of what it means to be a king. God sends us a king who is not exempt from life’s ills but embraces them. The king that God gives to us knows what it means to be poor, suffer insults, be ridiculed, face rejection, endure suffering, be betrayed, and face a most unjust and horrific death. This is our king, Jesus is not a king of prestige or grandeur but a king who brings light to darkness, hope to despair, sinners to mercy, and new life out of death. Christ dances before us pleading with us to hold on, cling to love, avoid being negative, stop feeling cheated, and be strong in faith! There may be hardship and disappointment now but there are more surprises to come.

Once we understand this truth, we will also understand that we are on a most incredible and awesome universal journey to Christ and becoming one in Christ. We all carry within us the image of God, the image of our suffering king, The One who lives in us also lives in all of our brothers and sisters. Failing to see this universal Divine Presence in all is one of the greatest mistakes we can make, for we also fail to see God, our king, as well. There are many things that can bring hardship to life. If we keep our head about us and do not lose hope, we can persevere and strive for the greatest degree of justice possible. Even though there are ample things that can challenge our faith, we also know that our deepest joy comes from union with God and our brothers and sisters. One day, the fullness of that joy will be ours to have when we are all eternally one with Christ our King forever.
The first reading—Daniel 7:13 - 14 The apocalyptic Book of Daniel came to prominence during a bitter persecution of the Jews in the second century BC, when it bolstered the Faith of the beleaguered chosen people of God. The book rises from the sixth century BC, during the Captivity of the Jews in Babylon (the Exile). Today’s selection from Daniel gave rise to one of the titles most frequently applied to Jesus: the Son of Man. The figure appears in the prophet’s apocalyptic vision in direct contrast to the four beasts that arise out of the sea, described earlier in the same chapter (7:1-9). Each of the beasts represents a well-known historical empire, presented as opponents of the reign of God. The “Son of Man” is also symbolic. He is in the forefront of the appearance of God’s reign; he comes “on the clouds of heaven,” figurative for the celestial realm of Yahweh (Ps 18:10f; 68:5). He is the symbolic representative of the new people of God, the saved or the elect, who are to receive dominion over the earth (7:18).

The Ancient One (v13): Yahweh depicted as old, expressing his eternal nature and purpose for all things. The Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last of all things (Rev 1:5-18). The New Testament proves Jesus is this long-awaited King of the Jews.

Gospel Insights

The appearance of Jesus before Pilate, reported in the synoptics as well, becomes an important theological statement in John. This centers around the notion of kingship as applied to Jesus. Pilate’s question (v33) picks up on the accusations of the Jewish authorities and the charges of political insurrection. Jesus’ answer implies that he knows the source of the accusation (v34). Pilate’s response carries a cynical note, an indication of his own bias against the people over whom he exercises political authority (v35). In answer to the accusation brought against him by the Jews, Jesus states that the kingship which is his is of a different order. It looks to an allegiance of the heart and a spiritual sovereignty which is in no way competitive with earthly power. He is totally devoid of militant adherents who could defend him in his hour of need (v36; 8:23).

The fact that Jesus insinuates some kind of kingship allows Pilate to reintroduce his question (v37). Jesus answers obliquely, giving at the same time an insight into the nature of the reign of God. Jesus has come to reveal the Father and his plan of salvation, the supreme truth (14:6). Those open to the truth hear the word of Jesus and accept it. In so doing they submit to the truth of God and become part of Jesus’ dominion or kingdom. This interior adherence to Jesus in faith is unrelated to the political accusations made against him, to which Pilate seemingly acquiesces. Jesus’ kingdom is of a different and higher order.

The Johannine Jesus when engaged in human conversation appears disengaged and somehow detached from what swirls about him. He is unlike the deeply involved, even thrust-upon, Jesus in Mark. The conversation with Pilate is more a serene doctrinal response than the answer of a pressured man on trial. Pilate’s ideas and those of Jesus pass each other like ships in the night. Indeed, Jesus is a king, but his point is lost on the Roman procurator.
1) We need to assess our commitment to Christ the King today.

As we celebrate the Kingship of Christ today, let us remember the truth that Jesus is not our King if we do not listen to, love, serve, and follow where Jesus leads. We belong to Christ’s Kingdom only when we try to walk with Christ, when we try to live our lives fully in the spirit of the Gospel, and when that Gospel spirit penetrates every facet of our living. If Christ is really King of my life, Jesus must be King of every part of my life, and I must let Christ reign in all parts of my life. We become Christ the King’s subjects when we sincerely respond to Jesus’ loving invitation: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). By cultivating in our lives the gentle and humble mind of Christ, we show others that Jesus Christ is in indeed our King and that He is in charge of our lives.

2) We need to give Jesus control over our lives.

Today’s Feast of Christ the King reminds us of the great truth that Christ must be in charge of our lives, that we must give Jesus sovereign power over our bodies, our thoughts, our heart, and our will. In every moral decision we face, there’s a choice between Christ the King and Barabbas, and the one who seeks to live in Christ’s Kingdom is the one who says, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Let us ask ourselves the question, “What does Jesus, my King, want me to do or say in this situation?” Are we praying each day that our King will give us the right words to say to the people we meet that day, words that will make us true ambassadors of Jesus? Does our home life as well as the way we conduct ourselves with our friends come under the Kingship of Jesus? Or do we try to please ourselves rather than please Jesus?

QUIZ TIME

1. What did the Ancient One give the Son of Man?
   A) Power B) Glory C) Kingship D) All of the above

2. When will the Son of Man’s kingdom be destroyed?
   A) in 2000 years B) After the Romans destroy Jerusalem C) When the Temple is rebuilt D) Never

3. What has Jesus freed us from our sins by?
   A) His blood B) His secret plan C) Animal sacrifices D) His parables

4. What does Pilate ask Jesus?
   A) "Are you the King of the Jews?" B) "Why are you in Jerusalem?" C) "Do you obey the Romans?" D) "Who is John the Baptist?"

5. What type of people does Jesus say listen to Him?
   A) Jews and Gentiles The Son B) The leaders of the people C) Those who belong to the truth D) Those who are very smart

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