

Readings: [The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe | USCCB](#)

*Rittenhouse verdict shows there is 'a lot more work to do' on criminal **justice** equity*

*Verdict reactions: from '**Justice** system broken' to **Justice** system worked'*

*Unequal justice system or **justice** served? Local observers have mixed reactions to Rittenhouse verdict*

And the headlines go on and on and on... If you have been following the Rittenhouse case, then you know how everyone has been seeking some form of **justice** for that **conflict** that occurred during protests last summer. Now that a verdict has been given, reactions are mixed.

To those who feel justice has been given, the experience provokes feelings of relief, joy, satisfaction, peace, as if power has been restored. To those who feel justice was not achieved, the experience provokes a sick feeling, stomach churning, anger, dissatisfaction, and restlessness until something is done to restore power.

At a legal level, justice is achieved when the law is used to fairly judge and punish crimes and criminals. At a sentimental level, justice is achieved when we feel like someone who has done us wrong “gets what they deserve,” and ***gosh does that feel good.***

I hate to admit it but when I'm driving and someone is being reckless and makes me almost crash, my immediate thought is “I hope you get a flat tire.” I might even stew in a moment of imagining it, until I snap out of it and they say, “sorry Jesus, I know I shouldn't think like that.”

There is even a whole genre of popular YouTube video compilations called “Instant Justice Karma” where people are caught doing a crime or being rude, and then something happens to them immediately, and yes, the feeling these videos provoke is of gladness and joy... *that’s what you get!* (Anadele, para que se le quite!).

We want people to pay the consequences of their actions, and if they don’t get justice in this life, then we invoke divine justice (*Pero hay un Dios, que todo lo ve...*) so that God who is all just and knows the truth can make sure they learn their lesson. Unfortunately, our desire for justice is often disguise for what we really want, **revenge**, and that will always be the case unless we approach justice differently.

So since the recent Rittenhouse *trial* and verdict is making people talk about justice, I thought it would be a providential opportunity to talk about, justice at a different level... through the **power** we find in Jesus, one of the themes that find in the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Today we stand on trial with Jesus as he is interrogated by Pilate, awaiting a verdict.

As we learned from the gospel of Mark these last few weeks, there was a lot of conflict at this time between the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities. Rome used their military power to capitalize on the power of the Jewish faith and temple. Jewish leaders wanted freedom from this governance so they could have Jerusalem to themselves and worship freely, and so were planning a revolt to go to war with Rome, besides the power of God was on their side.

This is the power the messiah was supposed to bring which they knew would come soon. It would be a king who would bring justice by

instilling laws and using military might to put Rome to shame and in their place. When word goes around that Jesus could be this king, there are three different reactions.

Some pointed to Jesus and said “yes, he is finally here! The one who was to come, the one who will bring political justice and peace! Let’s spread the word so he can get to work, make his army, build his kingdom and at last justice can come!” Jesus knew they had the wrong expectations (recall my first homily with you regarding expectations), which is why you might remember he kept telling them to not say anything, to keep quiet because they were wrong. In fact, earlier in John 6:15, it says they were coming to Jesus to take him by force and make him king, and what does Jesus do? He runs away, withdraws, he refused to identify as a king, *as their kind of king*.

Others pointed to Jesus as a blasphemer, especially the chief priests and pharisees. The point was to defeat the enemy, take revenge, but instead Jesus was teaching they had to pray and love “the enemy.” The point was to point to people’s mistakes and enforce the law, yet Jesus was teaching they had to first judge themselves for they would be condemned. The point was to rebuild the temple, yet we saw last week how Jesus wanted to destroy it. This was no powerful king, he would not bring about the justice they wanted it, this was no messiah to be enthroned, this was an instigator to be crucified. Justice would be to get rid of him.

Then there were the Roman leaders who saw him as a joke. At first they were curious about him, if he was a king then they wanted to see him, to measure the new competition but did not see what they expected

so they laughed and dismissed them, from one governor to another, and so now we stand before Pontius Pilate who with curiosity asks “are you the king of the Jews?”

It is here where Jesus affirms that yes, yes, he is a king, but with a power very different than theirs because it was a power not found in military strength, in an enforced political or judicial system, it was the power of heaven which Jesus had been manifesting all through the region, and the reason they were unable to see it is because it brought about justice in a completely different way, not giving people what they deserved, not through the punishment of the bad guy and honoring the good guy, but through **mercy**, and mercy is not partial, it is given to all.

This is the power given to a world in constant conflict. What is conflict? When two sources of power clash, and often through violence one overpowers the other. The winner feels justice, the loser is left thirsting for justice, revenge, and the cycle continues. The result from this violence is division, the kingdom of Satan.

To claim Jesus as king of the universe is to accept the power of God’s mercy on the world, and thus the kingdom of God is a kingdom of mercy, one that **must** come from above otherwise it is just another earthly power, another philosophy amongst others competing for a place in society, trying to overpower others. It **must** come from above and not from us, because only the power of God’s mercy can restore relationship and bringing about unity. If we are to achieve any sense of justice and peace in the world, we must begin there, with mercy.

That is the work of the church, to be a manifestation of Christ’s power of mercy on earth. When the power of Christ penetrates our

socio-economic system, then our resources are directed towards human flourishing in all areas, from health to education. When the power of Christ penetrates our society, then we seek ways to foster life, from conception to natural death, from the health of our bodies to the health of our environment. When the power of Christ penetrates our families, we are able to always seek reconciliation when conflict arrive. When the power of Christ penetrates our legal systems, then we can achieve a mercy-based justice that seeks to heal broken relationships.

Regardless of where we stand in the many social justice movements of today, of your own personal thoughts on the Rittenhouse trial for example, the power of Christ's kingship invites us to desire above all mercy for everyone affected, not that one side gets what they deserve, but that both sides find healing and a restored relationship.

As we bring our liturgical year to an end, we are invited to renew our recognition of Christ as King in our lives and recommit ourselves to be agents of mercy in the world. This is a recognition we make using frankincense, incense, which takes us right to the beginning, when at Christmas, the magi through the gift of frankincense recognized in the gentleness a baby God's mercy, a king, the beginning of justice.

+ *Fr. Carlos*