

Homily for Christ the King

2018

Suppose that the eternal, transcendent God, creator of the Universe, who always was and always will be, enters history as one of us. Doesn't it make sense that this God-man would be king of the material universe? How could it be otherwise? That is why the Son of God is the Lord of history, why we divide human time into BC (before Christ) and AD (the years after the Lord). That is why on the Easter candle the priest inscribes an Alpha and an Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying that Jesus is the beginning and the end of time. That is why Pope Pius XI established the feast of Christ the King in 1925 in response to totalitarianism, secularism, and other forces opposed to God's reign. That is the background for today's readings describing Jesus as our king.

The prophet Daniel had a vision of the end of time, in which Jesus as the Son of Man comes on heavenly clouds to the Father in heaven, who gives him dominion, glory, and kingship. All nations, of every language, serve him in an everlasting rule that will never fail. The prophet's vision clearly describes Jesus as King of the Universe.

Psalm 93 describes God's eternal kingship as powerful, everlasting; his decrees as holy.

The Apocalypse of John reveals Jesus as the firstborn of all the dead who will rise in him, and so he is ruler of all the kings of the earth. Further he has made us members of his kingdom, priests for his God and Father, and so we give him honor and glory forever. He is the Alpha and Omega, the one who always was, is now, and will be forever.

But **John's Gospel** is the reading which really gives us the character of Jesus' kingly rule.

Pontius Pilate is the Roman ruler of Judea. He has the power of Rome at his back---the power to tax, the power to send out Roman legions of soldiers, the power of life and death. But, with all this power, he is weak. Out of fear of losing his job he caves in, puts an innocent man to death. Three years later he is exiled to France where he dies.

Jesus, on the other hand, has no power. He is a member of a despised minority, an itinerant preacher with no home, no assets. As he says, his kingdom is not of this world. But he is a king, and after his death he ascends into heaven, where he is enthroned at the Right hand of God. From there he is Lord of history, and King of the Universe.

What do we learn from this?

First, we learn that Jesus is king for a reason. He not only brings us the truth about God, but also the truth about ourselves. We learn that living for the power, the pleasures, the enhancements of this world is meaningless. Like Pilate we'll die, and then what will we have? Jesus offers us a kingdom in which we will live, now and forever, in the presence of God, filled with knowledge and love to its fullness. Everything noble we hope for in this life will be ours.

Second, we learn that Jesus ought to be the king of my life. Kings have dominion. If Jesus is king, then we must obey his commands. But I wonder if we are not rather more taken by the things of this world. We worry about how much money we need to save to provide security for our old age. We worry about whether our children will have the opportunities we think they should have---good education, good prospects for a job, for a secure life. On the contrary, if we follow Jesus, then our concern is about others, about the beggar on the corner of the street where we drive, about the homeless, about the refugees, about the daily mass murders in our country, about the deterioration of God's good creation.

Third, we will be concerned about the spread of Christ's rule. Do others see us as living a life which challenges their self-seeking? Or do they see us as merely the good citizens which is the least we can expect from one another? How many people have come to you and said they are attracted to the life of faith that you live, or, in St. Peter's words, ask you about the reason for your hope in this wretched world?

The feast of Christ the King always summons me to a renewal of my baptismal commitment to Jesus, to the life I committed myself to in confirmation, to the priestly ministry of ordination.

When I respond to that renewal, when I once again make his teaching and inspiration the power of my life, then I am filled with a joy that others can see. On this day, let us all recommit ourselves to making Christ the king of our lives, so that he can be king of the universe. We have our upcoming Advent as a time for renewing our commitment and living in "the joyful hope of the blessed coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.