

The Solemnity of Christ the King (2024 - B)

Today on this last Sunday in the Church year, we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. On this day, we publicly proclaim Christ's kingship over us and over the whole world, and we declare that Jesus Christ is the ruler of our lives and in fact, the ruler of the entire universe.

Now, if we are going to call Christ a king, the obvious question is, "Where is His kingdom and who are His subjects?" In fact, as we just heard in the holy gospel, this is a question that also occurred to Pontius Pilate. Pilate asked Jesus if in fact He was a king, and Jesus replied to Pilate in a very mysterious way. This is what He said,

"My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews; but as it is, my kingdom is not here."

Then He went on to say,

"For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Now, what did Jesus mean by this? It was this. That for now, He will only rule over those who are willing to be His subjects, those who choose to be His subjects. He will not force His rule or His authority upon anyone. As God, as Creator of everything, Jesus Christ is already master of the universe. He doesn't need an earthly kingdom.

So, when we call Jesus our king, we don't add anything to His glory. Instead, it is we who are changed because it is we who admit our proper place in the world and before God. So, when we call Jesus our king, we are simply confessing the truth, that God is master of our lives, and that we bear witness to this truth by how we live.

Now let's consider what it means for us, for you and for me, to call Jesus our king. For us to call Jesus our king is not only to say that He is master of our lives, but also to bear witness to this truth by how we live in our day to day lives, by what we say and do, by how we behave, how we treat others and so on. In addition, it also means that we are going to be in direct conflict with our culture.

In fact, let me make this point in another way. If you don't feel or see a certain conflict between your Catholic faith and the culture in which we live, then one of two things must be true. Either Jesus Christ is not really your King and the master of your life, or you do not really understand the teachings of your Catholic faith.

In fact, let me go further. If you are really serious about living out your Catholic faith today, then you won't be able to avoid conflict and controversy with our pagan culture. Furthermore, these conflicts will force you to make choices and will lead you on different paths than the ones many people you know and love are taking.

Quite frankly, today, you cannot be a faithful Catholic and avoid being different from most people. Let me give you some examples of what I mean.

Many people today only focus on this world. They worship money (and the things and stuff that money can buy). We call these people materialists. Now to be happy, materialists believe that they must have more and more and more stuff.

But here's the thing. As they get more and more, their things and stuff begin to entrap them. They become ensnared by their possessions and end up spending more and more time taking care of them. They also spend more and more time working to pay for them. That leaves them with less and less time for those they love.

Followers of Jesus Christ are not materialists. Our love of neighbor comes before our things and stuff. We find happiness in our family and friends. We make time for others. We have meals together. We are generous with the blessings God has given us. We spend time with those we love. The love we have for our things is secondary.

Now, if you doubt what I've just said makes sense and is the right way to live, consider for a moment if being a materialist is really all that good. Do your things love you? When you open the garage in the morning, does your pick-up drive out, flash its lights and give you a hug? When you open my jewelry box, do your earrings jump up and down to get your attention and say "Wear me, wear me?" No they don't!

However, people do things like this. Husbands and wives are happy to see each other. Children run to their grandparents with open arms. Friends smile and wave when they get together. God is like that too. He desires that we approach Him with all our joys and sorrows.

Here is another way of how living our Catholic faith makes us different. It's our understanding of true marriage. We believe that true marriage is between one man and one woman. As we all know, our pagan culture does not.

Another example of how living out our Catholic faith make us different is this: our reverence for all human life. Our pagan culture has rejected God's commandment that we not kill. We live in a world where people who inconvenience us can be quietly eliminated through abortion or euthanasia or contraceptive drugs that kill new life. It's a choice many people take.

However, to be a subject of Jesus Christ means that we respect all human life from conception until natural death. In fact, it goes further and sees children as gifts from God and the fruit of the womb as a blessing from the Lord, and so, it means we support and congratulate couples on the birth of their children, and all the more so when it's their third, or fourth or fifth child because life is good.

These are just a few areas where our faith and our culture are in conflict. We all need to realize that in these and many other areas, the big conflicts in society are going to filter down to us and to the personal choices we make. Whether at home or at work, whether with friends or alone, we will have to make choices based upon who we choose to have as our King.

Some of our decisions will be easy, but others may end friendships. Some will be simple but others complicated. Some may earn us praise but others may cost us our jobs.

Quite simply, if Jesus Christ is our king, our lives will be in conflict with the pagan culture; we Catholics will be different. However, that is not a bad thing. Rather, it's a good thing because it is in living as Christ's subjects that we will find peace of heart.

So then, let us make sure that we always live as true subjects of Christ our King. Let us do so even when it means going against cultural norms and being different. Even when we may have to suffer for it. The kingdom of Jesus does not belong to this world, and only those who serve Him in this life will enter into it.

Jesus Christ is our King. May we always live in such a way that when He comes again to judge the living and the dead, He will recognize us as His subjects, and He will judge us worthy of everlasting life in His kingdom. Amen.