

HOMILY ~ CHRIST THE KING

NOVEMBER 19-20, 2022

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, more commonly known as Christ the King. This is a relatively new Solemnity in terms of Church tradition. It began in 1925 to counteract the emerging dictators, such as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. We needed to be reminded that Christ is King of something bigger than this world, and he is in charge. All these dictators have gone and only Christ remains. When I think of some of the world leaders today, I think maybe we need to be reminded of this more today than ever. One of the leaders that came to mind was Queen Elizabeth, who died recently. She will not be remembered for her great political power or for her great policy incentives. I think she will be remembered for her civility, her humble faithful service and her integrity. These are admirable qualities that I would like to find in our leaders today. If I could find them, I think I would vote for them.

In the Gospel Reading today, we have an account of the crucifixion. Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our salvation. This idea that God the Father sent his Son into the world to suffer and die bothered me for many years. I thought it portrayed God the Father as a vengeful, blood thirsty God, and that is just not consistent with the all loving God that I know. Why did Jesus have to die on the cross? We could have just followed his teaching, but we did not do that. If Jesus would have saved himself in some spectacular manner as the crowds were jeering at him to do, he probably would be remembered for a short time as a miracle worker and quickly forgotten. I think we are here today because Jesus suffered and died on the cross and rose for our salvation. Because of the way he died, we remember his unconditional love for us; and we accept him as our Lord and Savior because of the way he lived, because of his teaching and preaching, not just because of his miracles. God the Father knew this in advance because he knows everything. He knew that it was the only way we would understand.

I watched a portion of Queen Elizabeth's funeral with all of the pageantry, the crowds forming out of great respect for her, heads of state in attendance and the crown jewels. That is the way we would expect a king or queen to be treated. This is a marked contrast with the way that Jesus was treated. The crucifixion is not quite the Gospel we would expect for the solemnity of Christ the King. But maybe it is. Jesus died as he lived, surrounded by the marginalized and criminals, and he continued to serve his torturers, murderers and those who mocked him by forgiving them. Maybe this is the king that we need. Maybe we need to be reminded that the Kingdom of God begins here on earth, but Christ is King of something much bigger. We were created to live forever with God in heaven. That is our destiny. We are meant for something bigger than this world. The inscription of the cross, "*Jesus the King of the Jews*" was meant as a mockery but, in fact, was a Revelation.

Life in this world is hard at times. Sometimes we have to carry a cross. How do we respond to that cross? Do we side with those who mocked Jesus on the cross? Do we turn on God when we do not get what we want? God does not love me; he is not listening to my prayer. Do we behave like the non-repentant criminal and just demand a miracle? Or do we turn to God for help like the criminal who did repent? Much of the suffering we experience in this world, we have caused ourselves or we have inflicted upon one another. Shouldn't we have to bear the consequences for that?

We have work to do here, and we have lessons to learn. We need to grow in wisdom. Can we accept God's will in our lives because he is God and we are not? Do we try to live our lives as Jesus did, a life of love and service? Queen Elizabeth lived a life of civility, humble faithful service and integrity. You can say that she could not change the world with these attributes. She was just a figure head. Jesus lived a life of civility, humble faithful service and integrity. And he is still changing the world 2,000 years later.

Love & Peace,
Fr. Jim