

Homily - Jn. 18/ 33-37  
Feast of Christ the King – 34<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year B  
21<sup>st</sup> November 2021

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In Lloyd Douglas' novel, *The Robe*, the slave, Demetrius, pushed his way through the crowd on Palm Sunday, trying to see who the center of attraction was. He got close enough to look upon the face of Jesus. Later another slave asked Demetrius, "See him – close up?" Demetrius nodded. "Crazy?" Demetrius shook his head emphatically. "King?" "No," muttered Demetrius, "not a king." "What is he then?" demanded the other slave. "I don't know," mumbled Demetrius, "but he is something more than a king."

Charles Wendell Colson an American attorney and political advisor who served as Special Counsel to President Richard Nixon from 1969 to 1970, speaking about Jesus, used to have a powerful saying like this: "All the kings and queens I have known in history sent their people out to die for them. And I only know one King Who decided to die for His people - Jesus."

Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. And, this 34<sup>th</sup> Sunday is also the culmination of our liturgical year - the last Sunday of this particular cycle. Now, this feast was inaugurated in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, and it was to reassert the sovereignty of Christ and to remind

us of the fidelity and loyalty we owe to Him as our Spiritual King who rules us by truth and love. And, we declare our loyalty to Him by the quality of our Christian commitment, expressed in our day to day life by our loving service and forgiving love.

Now, today's Gospel shows us exactly what kind of a king we worship. And the passage we heard is a powerful portion of John's Gospel, and in this section Jesus is on trial. He has already been arrested and the Jewish authorities have called for His crucifixion and now Jesus stands before Pilate the Roman Governor.

Now, in Roman trials, the Governor asks the questions. And if the prisoners speak at all, it is only to answer the question that has been asked. But here, Pilate is not the only one asking questions. We find Jesus responding to Pilate in the form of a question. Now, Pilate asks Jesus: "Are you the King of the Jews?". Well! According to the Roman trial practice, Jesus should simply have answered the Governor's question. But instead, Jesus puts Pilate on trial by asking him a question in return. And Jesus asks: "Are you saying this on your own? Or are you saying this because other people have told you about me?".

And if Pilate were really paying attention to this question that Jesus was asking, it could have changed

his life, because Jesus's question contains a fundamental truth, and that truth is this: Pilates' life, your life and my life will not be changed if our only experience of Jesus or knowledge of Jesus comes from what someone else has told us about Him. Instead, Pilates' life, your life and my life can be totally transformed if only we have a personal experience of Jesus's love and Lordship in our lives.

If Pilate had personally himself allowed Jesus's truth to take root in him, he would have realized that Jesus is indeed a king unlike any other. He can and does rule our hearts if we let Him in, and Jesus speaks the truth that addresses every human need, and He pours out His love that changes our lives.

Now, how about us? Are we ready to let Jesus's questions change our lives? Today, He might be asking each of us the same question: "Are you calling me 'Lord, Master and King' on your own or only because other people have told you about me?"

Fortunately, we are not here on trial today. We are here to worship Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the beginning and the end, the one who knit us together in our mother's womb and the one who will welcome us home when we pass through the door of death.

Leo Tolstoy in his story “Martin the Cobbler” tells of a lonely shoemaker who is promised a visit by our Lord that very day. Eagerly, all day he awaits his arrival. But all that come - are a man in need of a pair of shoes, a young mother in need of food and shelter, and a child in need of a friend. Martin the cobbler ends the day thinking: “Perhaps tomorrow He will come,” only to hear a voice whispering to him: “I did come to you today, Martin; not once, but three times”.

The Kingship of Jesus Christ is not a kingship of power. It is a kingship of service, and of sacrifice. And it does not belong to this world. Jesus would say: “I am a king and I came into the world to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice”. And what is the truth? The Truth is the Cross, for He is a King who rules not from a royal throne in glory and splendor but from the Cross. Christ is the one who saves His people, a king who cares for the weak and the marginalized, who acts justly on behalf of the powerless and for those whom no one cares for. He is a perfect King who seeks the lost, and carries them home.

And, the kingship of Christ has, at its heart ‘not power, wealth or status, but ‘love, compassion and selflessness’. So much so, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 23, we find Jesus welcoming the sinner into the

kingdom without any demand: unconditional love for the sinner. And I realize that I myself am able to get some understanding of the Kingship of Jesus Christ only when I see that I am a sinner, only when I become truly aware of my own sinfulness and unworthiness.

Well! Dear friends, if we have the grace to know we are sinners, only then can we understand the triumph of the Cross and the Kingship of Jesus Christ. And at the same time, Jesus invites us to be His witnesses and He asks each of us to write a Gospel as Paul Gilbert in his poem puts it:

You are writing a Gospel, a chapter each day  
by the deeds that you do,  
and by the words that you say...  
Others read what you write, if it is false or true.

Now what is the Gospel according to you?  
God bless you all, **Amen.**

