

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN THE
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY
FEAST OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE
November 24, 2024**

The Feast of Christ the King is a recent addition to the Church’s calendar. In 1925, Pope Pius XI sought to counteract the growing secularization of the Western culture by adding this celebration to the Church’s celebrations of the mysteries of Christ. It was assigned then to the last Sunday in October. The reforms of Vatican II placed it at the end of the Church’s liturgical year, the 34th or last Sunday in ordinary time. Theologically, this celebration is in continuity with the Feast of Ascension: the exaltation of Jesus Christ at the head of all creation. The Scripture lessons are taken from the apocalyptic tradition.

SCRIPTURES:

Daniel 7:13-14

One Like a Human Being is exalted above all.

Revelation 1:5-8

Jesus Christ is one with the Lord of Hosts

John 18:33-37

The title “king” is affirmed at the trial of Jesus.

Psalms 93:1-2,5

A royal psalm acknowledges the universal reign of God.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Daniel:

Chapter 7 stands at the very heart of the Book of Daniel. The One Like a Human Being (Son of Man) comes before the throne of the Ancient of Days (The Lord) to receive a charge and mission to the whole universe. This One Like a Human Being stands in contrast to the four evils represented by the four beasts and the four kingdoms of chapters 2 and 7. This One will be faithful to God. The authority given him will last forever. To the Jewish people, this One Like a Human Being stands for the collective people of Israel. Christians have read this passage as referring to the One who would become king of all, Jesus Christ. A knowledge of apocalyptic literature will be helpful in understanding the symbolism of “beasts” and “kingdoms.”

Revelation:

The seven blessings of the Book of Revelation are meant to be read aloud to a community assembled in prayer while the world around them rages and threatens violence to God’s people. This is an apocalypse or a revelation of God’s power and love on behalf of those who remain faithful. The first blessings, like the remaining six, come to the community because of Jesus Christ, who himself was faithful in bearing witness, literally martyrdom, for the sake of God.

Christ's rule is beyond the realm of all earthly kings. They have no power over him now. The Roman ruler of Judea who condemned him to death is now himself dead. Christ rules on high and enables his followers to overcome death which their earthly rulers may hand them. The God of ancient ages still is and always will be. The I AM of Jewish history reigns in past, present, and future ages.

John:

Notice that John's Gospel has Jesus' trial primarily before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate is familiar with the expression "King of the Jews." That was the title of the Hasmonean kings who ruled after the Maccabees (135 to 63 B.C.E.). These had been overthrown by the Roman Pompey in 63. Pilate correctly interprets this title as a threat to Roman sovereignty over Judea. Jewish leaders had been shrewd in planting this title as one of the accusations against Jesus. They knew a Roman governor would see this title as an affront to the events of 63 B.C.E. When Pilate questions Jesus concerning this title, Jesus throws it back in his face: "That is the title you people fear, is it not? My power has nothing to do with Hasmonean or Roman pretensions. My power is over hearts and souls and values freely given over to God Most High." The "truth" to which Jesus refers is that God is the true ruler of the universe. The one really on trial here is Pontius Pilate and all that he represents. Jesus Christ already exercises judgment over all that is ungodly and "untrue."

My kingdom does not belong to this world: There are two different meanings for this world in John's Gospel: 1. My kingdom is not made in creation along with the other items in creation. My kingdom is uncreated; it is of divine origin and of divine purpose. This world cannot have any understanding of what it has not itself created. 2. My kingdom is directly contrary to the values and purposes of people who are in this world. It is a kingdom heavily contrasted with the values and purposes that sinful human beings pursue. It has no share in the evil that affects all things in this world.

The kingdom that Jesus seeks to inaugurate has something of both from the above. This kingdom is of divine origin, not to be attempted by human strategizing and human scheming. Only those who seek to do God's will shall have a part in building the kingdom of God.

Truth in the Gospel is not to be limited merely to an intellectual conception of reality. The Truth is Jesus Christ himself, a Living Truth, a Truth that is in God and that shares in the very life of God. That kind of truth is much more dynamic and powerful than abstract truth of the philosophers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. At his trial, as proclaimed by John, Jesus cannot be silent as in the Synoptics. The authority of God is being challenged. Discuss those situations where the Church needs to speak out about "truth" in our times. When is the law and the will of God being neglected and opposed in the world in which we live? Do you see how the Church cannot be silent on these issues any more than Jesus could be silent when Pontius Pilate challenged him?

2. Discuss your understanding of the call that God gives to all Christians to share in the royal privileges of Christ. If we truly belong to the body of Christ, do we not have to defend the dignity and sacredness of the human person, whenever and wherever these are being denied and challenged? Give examples of abuses of “royal privilege” that need to be opposed.

3. What role do you see your family (parish, group, class) having in establishing the kingdom of God on earth? What are the values and the ideals that you have an opportunity to uphold in your life, in the places where you find yourself: school, work, leisure, etc.?

4. Are you familiar with the “Star Wars” movies? Do you see those as modern versions of apocalyptic literature? How? What message of hope can we get from these movies? Is evil going to triumph no matter what we try to do?

PRAYER

May the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in Peace.
Amen.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The Feast of Christ the King provides an occasion for a reflection on the dignity of human persons. If the fullness of majesty and power has been conferred on Jesus of Nazareth because of his obedience to the heavenly Father, then surely those persons who share in the same humanity within which Christ lived are doubly blessed with dignity and sacredness.

Humans are made in the image and likeness of God, according to the Genesis account. The Lord God breathed the very life of God into the nostrils of the man, making him/her to live of the spirit. Having made the human couple, God pronounced them to be “very good,” indicating a special and unique relationship between humans and God.

When the Son of God became a man, one of us, one among us, the flesh of humans received a special dignity not heretofore conferred on men and women. The mystery of the incarnation speaks not only about God’s love for Jesus of Nazareth but proclaims loudly and clearly God’s love for all persons on earth.

If God has so exalted the human person, shall we not acknowledge the sacredness and holiness of human beings of every condition on the face of the earth?

In the Catholic tradition, sin does not alter the innate value of the human person. God loved us when we were still in sin. “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Either we believe that our humanness, even in the flesh, has been blessed by God, or we find no worth in human persons except that which they themselves have acquired. It is our belief that the value of the human person does not depend alone on what he/she has become but that the value is there in the first place as the work of God. A human being not yet born has value beyond

even the most majestic of the stars. A human being reduced to a mere shadow by age and illness still has more value than the great work of art coming from human hands. The person with disabilities has value that comes from God: human value, not as a burden on society.

See: The Catechism # 355-361

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