

CELEBRATING JESUS CHRIST OUR KING (YEAR B)

When we think of a king, we tend to think of a throne, a crown, a palace, robes, great wealth, power and prestige, armed forces guarding and protecting him, and people bowing and kneeling before him.

But when we think of Jesus, what do we see? He has no throne, crown, robes, palace, or soldiers. We see him walking the dusty roads of Palestine with a little band of disciples. He is surrounded by the poor and the sick, by sinners, outcasts, rejects, the *'battlers'* and the broken. In short, he is surrounded by the kind of people who would never get inside the gates of a palace today, let alone talk to a king or queen.

Jesus, then, is not that kind of king, and yet we don't hesitate to say of him now that *'Jesus is Lord'*, to call him the *'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'*, and to acknowledge that he is *'the king of the whole world'* and *'the Lord of all'*.

But even before God the Father raised him from the dead and crowned him with glory and honour and a place at his right hand, Jesus was already a king, as he admitted to Pilate in our gospel today. In the darkness of his own time and world, he was an endless source of light, goodness, and hope. He was what we might call today *'a people person'*. Just by being the kind of person he was, people were attracted to him. They sensed that he spoke and acted with authority, that he was a man of influence, and that he could make things happen for the better. Over and over again, his kind and generous heart went out to the poorest, most vulnerable and wounded people of his day. So much so, that whenever he saw a wrong, there and then he wanted to right it.

He was a leader all right, consistently courageous and compassionate. He was so great a leader that to this day, he remains our inspiration. He is still your king and mine.

Contrast the leadership of Jesus to that of some of the rulers of our days. Think of such tyrants as Saddam Hussein, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Robert Mugabe. One of the features of their iron control has been their *'cult of personality'*. They idolise themselves. They put themselves on pedestals. Everywhere they put around pictures or statues of themselves, pictures and statues that turn them into idols. But in the eyes of their people, those idols stand for oppression, cruelty, and terror. So when eventually their evil regimes collapse, the first thing people do is pull down those idols and smash them to the ground in pieces.

In the years when Communism was collapsing in Europe, *Time* magazine published a touching picture, taken in the Ukraine, formerly a Russian satellite state. It showed a group of people gathered in prayer around a simple altar in a public place. Standing on the altar was a bust of Jesus. *Time's* picture of that statue said it all. The idols have been toppled, and Jesus the Messiah-King is back in his rightful place.

What a contrast between his rule and the rule of the idols! The idols command; Jesus invites. The idols rule through fear; Jesus rules through love. The idols bring oppression and

death; Jesus brings freedom and life. No wonder we give him an allegiance and a loyalty which we would never give to any other person or institution on earth!

The Kingdom of Christ is made up of all those things we long for – all that is right and true, all that is beautiful, just, and good. Our Preface for the feast today calls it *'a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace'*.

Christ our King doesn't need or want soldiers and tanks. But he does need witnesses, people who are ready to stand up for justice, truth, peace, kindness, compassion and care. Both out there and within ourselves, one big struggle still goes on between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, between the kingdom of lies and the kingdom of truth, between the kingdom of evil and the kingdom of good, between the kingdom of malice and nastiness, and the kingdom of acceptance and respect, love and care.

On which side are we? Where do we stand? To whom do we belong? To whom are we bound? Who has our lasting loyalty and allegiance? You know the answer to that. Today we renew our loyalty and allegiance to Jesus, the King of the Whole Wide World.

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