

34th Sunday, Last Week in Ordinary Time- Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Theme: Jesus Christ, the Perfect and Greatest King of Heaven and Earth

Father Ed's Homily

With the celebration of the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect and greatest King of heaven and earth, we have come to the end of Ordinary Time for 2024. Next weekend, December 1, 2024, we'll celebrate our First Week of the Advent Season, a four-week preparation for Christmas.

The solemnity of Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe, was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical "Quas Prima." Pope Pius XI established it to remind Christians and the entire world that indeed Jesus Christ is the Lord and King of the Universe, heaven, and earth, both as God and as Man. The readings, especially the first and the second readings, explain the Solemnity we celebrate today. Most of us, if not all, may be surprised that on this joyful occasion, our Gospel reading talks about the trial of Jesus which is normally used during Holy Week.

For a couple of weeks now, our first reading has been taken from the Book of Daniel. In his book, Daniel uses an apocalyptic language to give hope and comfort to his people who were under Syrian oppression. He consoles them, encouraging them not to give up their faith in the mighty God, and that one day, the Syrian empire will fall. Then Israel will receive "dominion, glory, and kingship" in the person of the Son of Man. The early Christians saw Jesus as the Son of Man who the prophet Daniel referenced in his prophecy.

The second reading also uses apocalyptic language like the first reading to encourage the faithful to stand firm in their faith in God. Unlike Daniel, the author of the Book of Revelation identified Jesus Christ as the Son of God and called him the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and ruler of the Kings of the earth. It is in this second reading we truly understand and appreciate the Solemnity of the Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe, that we celebrate today.

We see Jesus standing on trial before Pilate in the Gospel reading. Reflecting and meditating on the Gospel reading, you will notice it is Pilate who is on trial, not Jesus. Pilate did not understand that Jesus' kingship is not an earthly one. Jesus' kingship is a spiritual one, not political one. As you know, political kingdoms treasure power, wealth, honor, pleasure while a spiritual kingdom values unconditional love, peace, forgiveness, humility, and selfless services.

The spiritual kingship was the reason Jesus was born, came to preach, and died for. This spiritual kingdom can be found in people of every nation who have a personal relationship with Jesus and his heavenly Father. They are true witnesses to the Truth: unconditional Love, Justice, Peace, Forgiveness, Humility, and Selfless service. Pilate failed to understand this. Or he knows the Truth but just wants to please the Jewish authority for his personal gains. We're told his beloved wife advised him to stand for the truth, hence, he washes his hands. Washing his hands means he has nothing to do with their intention to crucify Jesus. Then, Pilate hands Jesus to the Jewish authorities to crucify him per their request. Again, you see Pilate knows the truth but fails to stand for it.

Beloved parishioners, how often some of us behave like Pilate. We know the truth but at times, fail to stand for it. Maybe, for fear that if we speak the truth, we would not be accepted or recognized by our family, friends, or coworkers, etc. Today, many of us live in a world where our interpretation of truth is based on one's political or "earthly" ideology, no more on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fellow parishioners, by the grace of God, if one day we see Jesus' face to face, I wonder if he would welcome us into heaven based on one's political ideology or personal belief? I honestly believe the "ticket" to heaven is based on the unconditional love that one gave to God's children while on earth. That is the only Truth that will take you into heaven. As true followers of Jesus Christ, the King of heaven and earth, he has invited us to speak the truth if we want to be with him in his heavenly kingdom. Do you remember the Lord's Prayer? Are we serious about it when we pray for it? We can't have Christ's Kingdom of holiness, peace, love, and justice, etc., if we are afraid of the world and compromise with the truth. As we all know, "The Truth will set you free."

By the virtue of our baptism, we share in Christ's kingship. We belong to his royal family of God's holy people. We're reminded of this belief especially during baptism when the celebrant anoints you with the Oil of Chrism, saying, "He anoints you with the Chrism of salvation, so that you may remain members of Christ, priest, prophet and king, unto eternal life."

This coming Thursday, God willing, we will celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. For some parishes, this may be your first Thanksgiving without your loved one. May God grant him/her eternal rest and consolation to you all. Please be assured of my prayers for you and your loved one.

It is my hope and prayer that each and every one of us will not allow the outcome of this recent election to adversely affect your Thanksgiving celebration. Remember, your family is more precious than any election outcome that you may like/dislike.

Happy Thanksgiving to you all and God bless.