

Feast of Christ the King (B)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
November 21, 22, 2015

The Scriptures for this Solemnity of Christ the King put us on the jury at the trial of Jesus. In the first Scripture, Daniel calls us to remember the vision that guides us. We reflected on that vision, that goal, a little last week as well. In the second Scripture, the Book of Revelation proclaims that Jesus, the “*firstborn from the dead*” and “*ruler of Kings*”, reveals the ultimate truth about power and glory. We hear that truth is not at all about what the world thinks nor about what we may think. And then in the Gospel text we are asked to decide who we think is right and then to live according to our best judgment about power and truth. After a short back and forth of questions and answers with Pilate, Jesus says, “*Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.*”

Today's Feast became part of our Catholic tradition in 1925 under the leadership of Pope Pius XI. At that time Pius XI sensed a growing denial of Christ as King, and he connected that trend to the then current rise of secularism. In the early 20th century Catholics were losing touch with the authority of Christ and the Church. Dictatorships were arising throughout Europe and Catholics were being taken in by earthly leaders. Remember many Catholics were among those taken in by the various fascist movements of their time, and by leaders such as Hitler, Mussolini, and others. Pius XI gave us the Feast of Christ the King in order to highlight that for Catholics at least, and for other Christians as well, it is Jesus Christ who has power and authority, and not some fascist or secular leader.

Is the Feast still needed today? Maybe more than ever! We do not have Hitler and Mussolini present today. And maybe today it is not even SOMEONE, but SOMETHING! It has been a rather 'strange' even 'eerie' week. It has been a week of much discussion and opinion sharing. Some of it may have been enlightening for you, and maybe most of it has been confusing for you, as it has been for me. The SOMETHING I mean is actually twofold:

- a. one 'something' is the hold that 'individualism' has over us today ... this is a result of the same secularism that Pius XI felt rising around him in the 1920's. It is the idea that the only authority I really recognize is myself; the idea of Christ as ruler is not even considered. What matters is what I think, and what I do is up to me.
- b. the other 'something' is that we have lost our center, our starting point for everything our thinking, and out acting. It seems to me at least that for many the starting point is their politics rather than the gospel. Our politics, whether liberal or conservative, whether socially or financially based, colors how we hear, understand and live the gospel. It seems, however, that this is backwards. It is the gospel that should color how I think and act in

the world, or politically. In the days of the 'old West', at least in the old 'oater' movies, there would often be a sign at the entrance to the saloon and other places of gathering and business that said, "Leave Your Gun At the Door". When you and I come to Church we need to leave our politics at the door. We can pick up our politics as we leave, but only after we have heard the Word of the Lord with an open and unbiased heart.

Today we are so controlled by preconceived ideas based on 'what I want' and 'what my politics' are, that we can't actually hear the Word of God. Pilate looked at Jesus and judged Him in terms of the politics and mind-set of Roman authority. Thus He could not understand Jesus for who He really was. At least Pilate recognized that he could not honestly judge Jesus because he really couldn't understand where Jesus was coming from. Their starting points were simply not the same.

As we acclaim Jesus as Christ the King today, it is a good time to examine our own personal starting points. Is my starting point the gospel? Or, is it something else? Is my starting point myself and what I prefer, or is my starting point Jesus? For today at least our point of reference must be Jesus, Christ our King.

Please stand now to acclaim this belief and fact by joining in singing, To Jesus Christ our Sovereign King. No. 734