

The Solemnity of Christ the King 2020

Historians dubbed the 1920s the “Roaring Twenties”. The 1918 pandemic, ending World War 1, seemed to release an amount of pent-up energy. Humankind was ready to enjoy life again, taking off in all sorts of directions. In the midst of these wanderings, Mother Church, in the pontificate of Pope Pius XI, saw a need to collect scattered soul. The Church added into Her rhythm, the Solemnity of Christ the King, which we gather again today to acknowledge and celebrate. It is a time, intended every year to mark the final days before a new liturgical season begins. How fitting it is that Melanie and Nicole will crown their baptism today with Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. The Holy Father, however, did not introduce a striking new idea in 1925, as the Church has always known and proclaimed Christ its King.

To begin layering context into this great solemnity, we need to head back to ancient Israel and the promise of a Messiah. After fleeing Egypt, The Children of Israel pestered God to provide them an earthly sovereign, who they reasoned would elevate their state’s status, on par with neighbouring principalities.

Despite God's repeated attempts to dissuade people from marching toward that worldly allure, a young shepherd receives anointing to the throne. He is an endearing, but flawed individual, like all of us. David's kingdom, while noteworthy, is only temporary and much less than what God ultimately has in store. The promise of a messiah and God's reign truly realizes fruition only some centuries later. The problem, however, becomes that the kingdom God established continues to go unrecognized.

After all, what kind of king is born outside in a bed of straw with barn animals? Or, what kind of king has only the company of his virgin mom, her righteous husband and a few shepherds? The first two readings today, tells us much about why shepherds must be present. Nevertheless, what kind of king seeks political asylum shortly after their first breath? And, what king becomes a death row prisoner later in life! Such an individual, on such a trajectory, seems an unlikely candidate for any throne. "The King of the Jews and they laughed and mocked him." The Solemnity of Christ the King, brothers and sisters, emerges from out of God's faithfulness and His promise to care and deliver us from all evil.

The great prophet Ezekiel reminds us, “Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep.” Mother Church has always known and taught this but humankind can be really be an unruly herd at times? Again, “The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal.” If that sound like any of us today, then we are just the people, Jesus comes to gather.

At many funerals, as again this past week, we collected to pray the ever-popular Psalm 23. People recite these verses from heart and memory. “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” Many scholars accredit King David with penning these ancient and sacred hymns. The Church centers our day on these prayers we raise to God. Our hope, friends, belongs affixed to this promise in our deepest pain and highest joys.

Paul brings the revelation to further light, instructing the early church of Corinth, with these words, “For since death came through man, the resurrection of the dead came also through man.” This insight unlocks the question why God enters fully into the human condition.

The Apostle reminds us that the last enemy destroyed is death. Eternal life friends is the promise for all who belong to Christ. Notice Paul's choice of the word "Christ" in this instance. Christ is not Jesus' surname. Instead, Christos or Christ denotes an arrived Messiah. The ancient promise God made realizes fulfillment through Himself, in the person of Jesus. We don't need to understand the mechanics of how. What our hearts really need is faith to believe, and a tongue that says "thank you." Eucharist!

How we belong to Christ becomes evident through the ways we relate to our king. Remember our king is a collector of lost souls and Mother Church, always faithful to Her responsibilities, encourages us to join Her in that effort. She knows the way to Jesus. She even marks the path like breadcrumbs leaving a trail. The sacraments of the Church, and Confirmation friends, mark, from our entry into this world, right to the doorsteps of the king's palace. Will the king recognize loyal subjects at the gate or will he see imposters? Here's how he will tell the difference. He will ask, has anyone seen me hungry, thirsty, a refuge, naked or in prison? It's a yes or no answer.

We live in a world crowded with hunger. According to Alberta Health Services, 1 in 10 households in this province suffers from household food insecurity and that statistic reports from 2017.¹ Please support our St Peter's Saint Vincent de Paul, Catholic Women's league, and Knights of Columbus. Moreover, should we measure only the physical hunger banished by a can of something? Many First Nation's and others continue to lack clean drinking water. Jesus is very thirsty these days. In 2019, Alberta reported an incarceration rate of 110 persons, per one hundred thousand. That stat doesn't even begin to capture people entrapped in addiction or deteriorating body. There is lots of work for people of hope and promise. The king needs all the baptized collecting and distributing the tangible love of God.

The kingdom we pray come about each and every time we recite the Lord's Prayers only happens with our active participation. We got this folks even with a raging pandemic all around us. We, who belong to Christ, joyfully await the day when our king will say, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'
Amen

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