

CHRIST THE KING

CYCLE B

Sometimes things aren't really as they seem. You may have heard the story of Susan Boyle. She was a contestant on Britain's Got Talent. When the 48 year old Boyle took stage, the judges smiled and sort of smirked. Then she opened her mouth and began to sing and their jaws dropped along with literally millions of people worldwide who saw her performance on television and on the internet. We see a similar scene today in the Gospel. Imagine Pilate looking at Jesus, bloody and beaten and he's heard that Jesus is a King. He didn't look like a king. He didn't act like a king. And that is at the heart of this unusual feast day we celebrate, the Feast of Christ the King.

In America, our ancestors left England in part to escape the tyranny of a King. We really don't understand the idea of a King. Yet, we read in Scripture many stories about kings, and know that Jesus is considered the King of Kings. What does that mean?

I think it means many things. First, Scripture tells us that we are adopted children of God. So we share in the royalty. Second it means that because we share in this royalty we have responsibility. Consider the responsibility of suspects to their King. It includes loyalty and in the case of our King, faithfulness. If we are to be faithful to our King, we must obey Him and follow his instructions. As Catholic Christians, we obey the 10 Commandments and follow his instruction found in the Sermon on the Mount. But it is much deeper than that because the very first commandment tells us that we should put God above all else. As Americans, this is a tough challenge.

Let's consider some things that we put above God. First, consider how we spend our time. How many times have I heard people say that they are too busy to begin their day with prayer? If we mapped out just one day, 24 hours we would see that we use very little of our time for prayer. I was at the Women in Spirit meeting last week and the speaker was a Baptist preacher. She was asked about her prayer life and her response was that everything she does during her day is considered prayer. But that really begs the question. The question is, how much time do we dedicate entirely for prayer? We need to have special quiet time to pray so that we can listen to God. Prayer is a two way communication, and if all we do is talk to God and we don't listen for His response, what good is that? So, what do we use our time for? The answer is the things that we put before God. Like Work. How many people forgo Sunday mass and instead they spend time at the office doing work? This is misplaced priority. Often we use the excuse that we do it for our family. So I guess we put our family ahead of God. We should ask ourselves if this is what is meant by the first commandment that we should have no other gods before the one true God? Consider the fact that the first four commandments are about God.

The second place we can look to see if we put things before God is to reflect on where we spend our money. I had a young man in Atlanta tell me to come to the school he worked at to look at the Chapel. It was beautiful. He said, you can tell how much a person loves God by how much of their money they spend on their God. In our lives, we as a rule tend to see what we have left over and then figure out how much we can afford to give to God. In the days of the Kings, the Kings took their portion first. And scripture tells us to give to God out of our first fruits, not out of what we have left over.

We can ask the same questions about who we associate with, what do we read, what do we watch on television and on and on. I am certain that in all these cases we will see that we are not treating our God like a King.

What I want to focus on for a few minutes is Country. It seems to me that King and Country do kind of go together. If we consider Jesus Lord and KING, then what effect does that have on our loyalty to our country? In an article I wrote a week or so ago, I asked the question to myself, “Am I a Catholic American or an American Catholic?” It is a tough hard question. When John F. Kennedy was running for President, he all but disavowed his Catholic Faith. How different is that from Major Hasan who killed 13 in the name of his Muslim faith and his Muslim “King”, Allah? I am not condoning what he did, and we should have been more vigilant to prevent what he did, but have you stopped to think of the level of commitment to faith one has to have to do what he did? Here, if someone tells us that using the word Jesus hurts someone’s feelings, we prevent them from using it. The ACLU has so intimidated Americans that we cow tow to the anti-Christians and give in. That’s not the way to honor a King. Today, I think is a good time to look deep inside ourselves and to ask that tough question, Am I a Christian American or an American Christian? It is a time to ask ourselves if we act like Christ is a King. It is a time to evaluate our commitment to our Faith. Next week we move into a new Liturgical year with the start of Advent. Perhaps we can use the Advent time to recommit ourselves to our Lord and King and when we do, we earn the right to consider ourselves royalty because as St. Paul says, we are the adopted children of God. The question is, Do we act like it?