

Feast of Christ the King

2 Sam 5:1-3

Col 1:12-20

Lk 23:35-45

As Jesus died on the Cross, an inscription had been placed above His head, "This is the King of the Jews" – in Latin 'Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum' (No letter J, only an 'I' in Latin so INRI). When we hear the word 'king', what images come into our mind? Power, wealth, bravery, justice, profligacy, majesty? The kingly hero of the Jews was David and despite his wandering eye for the ladies and several other little peccadillos, he was their warrior king.

In the immediate years following the entry of the Jews into the Promised Land, they acknowledged God as their king. His intention was that He would rule His people through the Law of Moses. The Jews didn't like being different so they asked God why they couldn't have an earthly king they could see and so be like other nations. Surprisingly, God granted their request and appointed Saul as their king, who was succeeded by David. God promised that the kingship of David would never end, and Jesus, born in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David was not only an heir of David, but God's Son, so in Christ, both the earthly and heavenly king of God's kingdom is present.

God is adaptable and no matter what people think they want, God has many ways of leading people to Himself. The penitent thief dying on a cross next to Jesus was moved to say, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," and he received the response, "Today you will be with me in Paradise," which Jews believed was the bosom of Abraham, reserved for the righteous after their death.

Before Jesus was crucified, St John describes the encounter between Jesus and Pilate in the Judgement Hall. Pilate was the Roman Governor behind whom stood countless legions of soldiers who had conquered the world from Hadrian's Wall in northern Britain to the Temple Wall in Jerusalem and beyond that to the edge of the Sahara Desert. They represented a powerful empire which traced its heritage back 800 years. Its forces knew how to maintain peace through oppressive control. Opposite him stood the battered prisoner supported by His mother, a small group of women and a few devastated men. There was no equality of earthly power here, but it was the powerless one with no armies, yet clothed with the Truth, that forced the powerful Pilate to justify himself.

'Are you a King?', demanded Pilate. The Governor only needed a word, or even a hint of a 'yes,' so he could justify what he knew he had to do. He was not interested in religious disputes, but he was interested in controlling a rebellious Jewish challenge to Caesar. The powerless one's silence was broken by the words, "You say I am a king. I have come to bear witness to the Truth. Everyone who is of the Truth, hears my voice." The powerful one had no answer but to ask, "What is Truth?" In posing that question, Pilate exposes the pretensions to greatness based on fear and brutality. Might is not right, and a majority vote is not the voice of heaven. The biggest lie of all is the assumption that whether the secular state is built on military power, economic power or on pro-choice woke ideology, it believes it has authority to demand the allegiance of its people.

"My Kingdom is not of this world." The King of kings, Truth Himself, challenges the self-delusions of history. The 'powerless' King with His motley crew of disciples and the

millions who would subsequently claim allegiance to Him, offers the world the Truth that it is love and mercy that makes the world right. The world's empires rise and fall. They become dust and ashes making themselves as absurd as their anthems, "You are not my king," or "We have no king but Elvis."

The Truth of God is king. The Truth that is binary and not relative. A half-truth is not the truth. Truth is not what we want it to be. It is the Truth revealed by the One who sits on the heavenly throne. It is Truth who is the One who reigns from the Cross taking to Himself the lust and hate of the power-hungry secular straw men. Truth is the One who died offering loving mercy and forgiveness and who was raised to the new life on the third day. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6). The Truth that God's power is Love, not coercive control.

Today we will receive and welcome Cristian, a young man who has recognised the Truth that Jesus revealed and whose spiritual journey has been nurtured through the teachings of other Christian churches, has led him to embrace the fullness of the Catholic faith. In becoming Catholic, a person does not reject his or her Christian journey but completes it. The Christian way is not for the fainthearted because it is the Way of the Cross, which is the way to salvation. Cristian has chosen the Confirmation name of the great theologian and mystic, St Thomas Aquinas, who with St John Henry Newman is a patron of Catholic Education. A very influential and powerful saint indeed.

So let us rejoice with him and all those, especially in our community, who are also journeying towards the Truth revealed by Jesus the King of the universe.

Msgr Harry Entwistle

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