

Sunday Homily

CHRIST THE KING

22 NOVEMBER 2020

YEAR A

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand,
‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you.’”

Matthew 25:34

Illustration

In recent years, stories about the few remaining royal families have made headlines in the newspapers. The British royal family has been under scrutiny in most countries in the world as people follow their fortunes. What emerges is that there still exist very high ideals for members of a royal family, and at the same time there is a very critical attitude towards their human weaknesses.

Today we are celebrating the feast of Christ the King. Jesus was a man who was both respected and despised. At times, it was almost impossible to see any trace of majesty in him; but even so, he was a king. He is Lord of the universe. And we are his brothers and sisters. It is important to realise that, as brothers or sisters of the king, we are also members of the royal family. So we are not only members of God’s kingdom; we are royalty.

Gospel Teaching

Through our baptism we have become full members of the Lord’s family and therefore we are truly royal people. This means of course that each one of us is due respect. Every human person deserves respect – none of us is worthless. If we were, then God would never have bothered to become one of us, and to suffer and die to save us. When we realise quite how much God cares about us, and quite how much he loves us, then we realise quite how much we are worth. The dignity of our birth as human beings has now been enhanced by our membership of the kingdom. It means that we have a role to play in the world, and it follows that we must respect the nobility of our own calling. We are to cultivate a profound respect for ourselves and for those other members of the kingdom who have been called by God to be his chosen sons and daughters.

However, we are all human. Just look at the royal families which still exist in our age. They fail, their weaknesses often emerge, at times they cannot live up to the ideals expected by those around them. Like them, we are also broken and needy people. Those around us are the same. Being part of the kingdom of God means respecting also the brokenness of others. It means being with them in their weakness, even recognising their sovereignty in the midst of much confusion

and pain. Think of the good thief hanging beside Jesus on the cross. There was not any grandeur in our Lord. Nor must he have resembled a king. Yet somehow, perhaps intuitively, the good thief recognised it. He honoured Jesus. He asked to be a member of his kingdom. And in return he was promised membership of the royal family of the Lord.

To be a Christian is to be a member of that family. That is why today's Gospel reminds us that we must care for the sick, visit the imprisoned, feed the hungry and welcome the stranger. It is the right of every member of the kingdom to have this dignity and this respect. It is also the duty of every baptised person to be truly royal: to look after those members of the family who are in difficulty, and to do all in our power to see that equality and fairness are alive in God's kingdom here on earth.

Application

Christ the King is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. But you and I, the members of this royal family, are here among his people. Today's feast challenges us to live out our royal responsibilities and duties as completely as we can. For the kingdom of God is not only about caring for those within it. It is about loving and seeking out those who are outside it. The passage from Ezekiel talks of God as a good shepherd searching out his sheep from all the places where they have been scattered. He seeks the lost, binds up those who are injured, and strengthens the weak. That is part of our role, too, as members of God's kingdom. But we do not have to do this alone – we do it with our King, our God.

Let us today celebrate Christ our King with great joy, and let us celebrate also the fact that we too are royal members of his kingdom.