

HOMILY ~ CHRIST THE KING

Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King, so let's talk about royalty. I found out some interesting facts about Queen Elizabeth of England. She is 95 years old and attends over 400 events per year including meetings, ceremonies, presentations and charity events. Considering there are only 365 days per year, this is a huge number for someone at 95 years of age. Queen Elizabeth has had a stand-in since the 1980's. Her name is Ella Slack. She stands-in for all of the royal dress rehearsals to make sure everything runs smoothly for the Queen during the events. We are all called to be a stand-in for royalty. We are called to be a stand-in for Christ the King. Jesus left the world unfinished. The world is unfinished because we are unfinished. The Kingdom of God starts here and will not be finished until heaven. But Jesus wants us to work with him to bring us to completion. Jesus will work with each one of us to become the person we were meant to be.

In terms of being a stand-in for Christ the King, there are two extremes. On one extreme, we may feel that we have to be in control of everything because we do not quite trust God to give us what we need or what we want. That trust is difficult at times but we need to remember that God loves us unconditionally all of the time, he always hears our prayers and he will care for us if we work for him. On the other extreme, we may feel that God has a plan, what is going to happen is going to happen, so it does not matter what we do. This is called predestination; and the Catholic Church does not teach predestination, while some Protestant denominations do. Some denominations believe that some individuals are part of the elect from the time they were created, and these individuals are the people that will go to heaven. The Catholic Church teaches that what we do in this life does matter. We need to do our part and work with God to get to heaven.

One of the things that struck me about the Gospel Reading this week is that Jesus is fearless. He has this interaction with Pilot. He knows that they are planning to crucify him, but he just tells the truth. If he were acting out of fear, he would be trying to control the situation. He would be trying to make some kind of deal with Pilot to save his life. "We can work together. I will not get in your way, and you will not get into mine." But Jesus does not do that. Pilot is acting out of fear. He keeps asking if Jesus is the King of the Jews. He is afraid that Jesus is going to rob him of his power. He is also worried about how the Jews will react to his decision. After all, they did turn him over to Pilot. He does exercise the ultimate control of the situation. He has Jesus crucified. When I look at the Gospels as a whole, Jesus never acts out of fear, he just tells the truth. And Jesus has reason to fear. He is always reaching out to the poor and the marginalized. That causes us fear at times, but not Jesus. Jesus is repeatedly criticized for reaching out to the poor and marginalized, but he does not stop. The Scribes and Pharisees are repeatedly trying to trick Jesus or trip him up, but he just continues to tell the truth. If we are going to be stand-ins for Christ the King, we need to try to stop acting out of fear. All of us feel fear. We need to recognize it when it happens, allow ourselves to feel the fear and then investigate the fear. Is it out of proportion to the threat? Is there something reasonable we can do to reduce the threat? Or do we just have to accept the situation as it is and ask God for help to not act out of fear. I am trying to watch what is going on in my life with wonder, knowing there are things that I do not understand, rather than continuously trying to control things out of fear.

If we are going to be stand-ins for Christ our King, we need to come to know him better. I came across something from an unknown author entitled *They Missed Him!* that reads in part:

They were looking for a Lion, He came as a Lamb, and they missed Him.

They were looking for a Warrior, He came as a Peacemaker, and they missed Him.

They were looking for a King, He came as a Servant, and they missed Him.

They were looking for Liberation from Rome, He submitted to the Roman cross, and they missed Him.

They were looking for a fit to their mold, He was the mold maker, and they missed Him.

If we are going to be a royal stand-in for Christ our King, we cannot try and fit him into our mold, we need to follow his example and fit into his mold. We need to have faith that Jesus loves us all of the time, he wants what is best for us, he will never leave us and he cares for us all of the time. Our faith gives us hope. My hope is not the conviction that things will turn out right according to my standards because that does not always happen. I have hope because Christ is our King, he is still in charge, he can see a bigger picture than I can understand and I can put my life in his hands. Jesus is our King.

Love & Peace,

Fr. Jim