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### A KING UNLIKE ANY OTHER

CHRIST the King Sunday—I think this Festival in many ways is not a helpful festival for the Church to celebrate.

- I think it is confusing both in its use of the title “King” and in what it tends to make us think about JESUS.

The Festival of CHRIST the King was instituted by Pope Pius IX in 1925.

- The Pope was concerned that the Church’s followers were being lured away from the Kingdom of GOD by the increasing secularization of the kingdom of the world.
  - (Not a problem for us today, is it?)
- So, he thought a festival that reminded the Church that CHRIST is King would pull them back. But the idea of CHRIST as King as it appears in the Bible is really not something that JESUS taught or promoted.
- Even in HIS conversation with Pilate, JESUS was trying to communicate that if Pilate wanted to talk about kingdoms, he needed to understand that JESUS was a king unlike any other.

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The titles that the early Christian Church used for JESUS were titles that were used for Roman emperors.

- King of kings; Prince of Peace; Lord of lords; Mighty GOD—these were all names that the Roman Emperor claimed and was called.
- The early Christians applied these titles to JESUS to show that HE was greater than even the emperor,
  - and of course, the emperor didn’t like it.
  - So, the Romans tried to wipe out the upstart Christian movement.
    - They didn’t like the suggestion that anything or anyone was greater than the emperor and their empire.

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But, you see, that’s the thing.

- Empires and kingdoms then and now are established and verified by certain criteria as to what makes them great.

Case in point, last week’s acclamation of the disciple upon seeing the Temple in Jerusalem, “What large stones!”

- The size and the grandeur of the Temple and of Jerusalem were testimony to the greatness of Herod’s kingdom, even though Herod was dead, his kingdom was divided up between his sons, and the Romans had taken control of all of it.
- There are notable and perceivable measures of what kingdoms should look like, based mostly on wealth and magnificence and privilege and power and authority and majesty.

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And yet, JESUS’ Kingdom is different than the kingdoms of the world.

- JESUS’ Kingdom isn’t about buildings and armies and power and wealth.
  - JESUS’ response to Pilate, recorded in today’s gospel, tells us the measure of His kingdom. *“MY kingdom is not of this world... You say that I am a king. In fact the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to ME.”*
- Actually, that last line should more accurately read, *“Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to MY voice.”*

My brother, Joel and I, never let disagreements become divisive in our close relationship.

- Whenever we couldn't agree on a fact or an outcome, rather than keep arguing our side against the other, we simply said, "Seek the truth."
  - We actually then enjoyed looking for the truth and calling the other to tell him the "truth," even if it meant the one telling had gotten it wrong.
- Often on social media when I see a post, that states facts, I usually research it, seeking the truth, and if it's incorrect, I post the truth to avoid more—what do we call it now?—alternative facts.

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JESUS is unlike any other king, because JESUS is the King of truth.

- HIS Kingdom, therefore, is not about determining the truth, but is the truth.
- HIS Kingdom is not about content but character.
- HIS Kingdom is not ruled by a king, but by a commitment.
- HIS kingdom is not a thing, but a person.

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We don't really understand kingdoms and kings in this country.

- After all, we rebelled from a tyrannical king and sought freedom and a different form of government.
- We rejected kings and kingdoms in favor of representatives of the people democratically elected and checking and balancing each branch of the government to prevent any one branch from having too much power.

Yet we are also fascinated by kings and kingdoms, or with regard to Great Britain, queens and kingdoms, especially most recently with the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

- We follow marriages and births and trips around the world of people who are in their positions of authority more because that position, than because of popular acclamation.
  - So, our understanding of kings and kingdoms is based more on the stories we hear about kings, than on what it may truly be like.

We even admire the legends of kingdoms that are good and beneficial.

- Many have come to love the stories of King Arthur, who united the Britons so that each independent fiefdom came to support the king against all foes.
- Legend says that Arthur built a round table so that everyone—even the king was equal in the presence of all the other knights.

After John F. Kennedy was assassinated, Jacqueline Kennedy suggested that his vision for the country was idealistic but something to be made.

- In an interview shortly after President Kennedy's death, Mrs. Kennedy said, "There will be great presidents but there will never be another Camelot."
  - Though a kingdom, Camelot came to represent the Kennedy presidency, and helped the country deal with their loss.
    - But no true kingdom was ever like the mythical Camelot, and the United States is not a kingdom.

Nevertheless, we admire kingdoms and what they might be.

- And we are led to imagine kingdoms as nations, territories, and landlocked empires.

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Yet JESUS' Kingdom is something more, something different.

- It is about a special kind of sovereignty rather than land and power: it is the body and flesh commitments of its people to love and to fairness, a pledge to work for justice and freedom for all.

Thus, JESUS' Kingdom can be anywhere, anytime that Kingdom behavior is shown through the words and actions of its people.

- In JESUS' Kingdom, it is character that is the measure.
- In JESUS' Kingdom, it is witness that can be heard and seen that mark the boundaries of that Kingdom.

We Christians have pledged to be part of that Kingdom—to belong to the truth.

- We have committed ourselves to speak out for the least and the lost,
  - and more than speak, to act for the benefit of our neighbors, recognizing that our neighbors are anyone in need.

Yet our tendency is allowing the kingdoms of this world to be the ones to set the tone, to control our communities, our nations, our governments.

- By doing so, we actually seek to lift up those who are not really interested in the Truth at all, but rather who tell half-truths, false truths, and fake truths that tap into our insecurities and our fears.
  - Perhaps it's just easier to live with worry, concern, suspicion, and panic, than to fight for something different.
  - Perhaps we feel safer when someone else is making decisions for us, when rules and regulations are clearly defined, when expectations are known and assumptions can be accounted for.
  - It's much easier, less challenging, and less risky to simply accept the maneuvers and decisions of monarchs instead of rising up in resistance.

After all, we know what happens when kingdoms are confronted for their wrongs, defied for their abuses.

- You end up like JESUS.
  - And most of us are just fine letting JESUS do the heavy lifting rather than imagining that HE really meant for us to bring about HIS Kingdom here and now.

It doesn't take much effort to see the consequences of daring to dispute power and one need not look long or hard to acknowledge the results of facing off against authority.

- So, we stay quiet. We play it safe.
- We ignore the obvious Truth for the sake of self-preservation or self-comfort.
  - Because, we know all too well, that when you stand up to privilege, you can expect kings to push back to protect their kingdom and their position.
  - When you stand up to the kingdoms of this world that survive because of and thrive on fear, expect to be discredited and disregarded.

The kingdoms of this world depend on sowing suspicion and depend on an individualism with everyone for themselves alone.

- The kingdoms of this world insist that keeping people in their proper place, as determined by those in charge is the mark of achieving and accomplishing leadership.

Not so with the Truth.

- For the Kingdom of JESUS chooses relationship.
- The Kingdom of JESUS chooses freedom and justice, especially for those who have little or none.
- The Kingdom of JESUS chooses grace and love over fear and control.

The image of CHRIST as King isn't helpful for us in this country today,

- because what we image as a kingdoms and kings is far from what JESUS is and can be for each of us.
  - The kingship of JESUS is about truth—GOD'S truth—that all people everywhere are loved of GOD and are of infinite value in GOD'S eyes.
  - The kingship of JESUS is for those who wish to belong to the truth and to listen to the voice of Truth.
    - That's not the vision and message of the kingdoms of this world.
      - But it is the truth of the King of Truth—a King unlike any other.