

HOMILY for the FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING – Year C

The Reflecting on this Sunday's Feast of Christ the King & his power, I'm reminded of this new cute story that I'd like to share with you.

One of the sideshows at a circus featured a strong man who squeezed an orange until it appeared to be completely dry. When he finished, the strong man's manager challenged anybody in the audience to come forward & try to get one last drop out of the super-compressed piece of fruit. To make the offer a bit more enticing, the manager offered a thousand dollars to anyone who successfully eked out even one tiny drop of juice.

A weight lifter with bulging muscles bounced up onto the stage, grabbed the orange from the manager, & pressed it with all his might. Nothing came out. Next, a big burly construction worker sauntered up & took the orange from the exhausted weight lifter. After ten minutes of intense squeezing & a lot of grimacing, the construction worker finally admitted defeat.

"No other takers?" the manager asked with a satisfied sneer.

"May I try?" responded a short, skinny bespectacled man from the back row.

The manager couldn't keep a straight face as he & the rest of the crowd watched as the stranger made his way up to the front. Suddenly, the laughter stopped when, to everyone's amazement, the little guy picked up the orange & squeezed a puddle of juice onto the floor. Flabbergasted, the manager sputtered, "How the heck did you do that?"

"I am an accountant!"

I'm sure Jesus could do that & much more without any problem! Anyhow, this Sunday, the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year C, the Church invites us to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. This feast was designed to remind us that Christ remains the King of the Universe & will come to judge the living & the dead at the end time. Hopefully we have chosen Him to be our one & the only true leader & stayed on good terms with Him to the end. For Christ is the Alpha & the Omega, the beginning & the end of Creation as we say that about Him at Easter Vigil.

Living in a democratic society, I don't think today's feast means much to us. The last thing an American Catholic wants to hear is the word "King." In fact, I recalled once I've had a talk with an American friend of mine about the royal system of governance in England, Canada, & so on. He did not like it at all & viewed it with contempt because he felt that system of governance means there are kings/queens & peasants/slaves. He could not see that type of relationship exist in the human family & absolutely hated it. As someone who grew up in a country that used to have the royal system of governance at one point, I could relate to him & understand why he hated it. I was told that in Viet Nam when the king went by, you better knelt & had your heads bowed without looking up at him. Otherwise, you would have your heads chopped off. That is just one of the challenges in living under the royal system of governance. Besides, everything under that system works only one way – the way of the king/queen. There is no appealing for any unjust decision that we might have encountered; for no one could save the victim's fate.

By now, you've probably wondered why the Church would use the royal image with its bad connotations to describe Jesus Christ. Part of the reason for the Church to stick with the Feast of Christ the King & that title is because it is one of the oldest institutions & it could not change that easy. If I had any saying in making changes to this feast & its title, I would change

its name to “Christ the Good Shepherd,” or “Christ my Best Friend Forever (BFF).” For throughout His life, Jesus always showed His compassion & care for people around Him. He never treated the poor & the lowly with contempt or looked down on other human beings like a powerful & heartless king would. He called on His disciples to take care of the hungry & the homeless by feeding them & sheltering them instead of sending them away to fend for themselves. He always asked His followers to be better than the rest of the world by being people of love & virtues. That is why He taught His Church the two Commandments of love & demanded them to go in search for the lost sheep/souls instead of sticking with the majority of ninety nine sheep and abandoning the minority. That is why Jesus is truly the Good Shepherd & our BFF, instead of a typical powerful king. That is why I believe that we should rename this last Sunday of the Liturgical Year “Christ the Good Shepherd,” or “Christ my BFF.”

Over the years, the Church has encountered all sorts of heresies that had misled the world about the true identity of Jesus Christ. Some claimed that Jesus was just a human being who was blessed with excellent speaking ability & other gifts. Other than that, He was merely human like you & me. These folks tried to downplay Jesus’ miracles & explain away all the extraordinary things happened to Him, including His Easter resurrection. Meanwhile, others said that Jesus was all divine & did not have any human emotions at all. However, we’ve seen throughout the Gospels that Jesus had shown how compassionate He was toward a hungry crowd, or how much He felt for the suffering and the social outcast. As we have entered modern time, the world has slowly turned away from Christ & focused more on material things & consumerism. Hence, power & wealth has become the king/queen of our world.

Unfortunately, the denial of Christ’s kingship does not just stop there. In fact, our current world has made itself & various ideologies to have more power over everything else, including its relationship with Jesus. Everyone has turned oneself into the king/queen & done whatever he/she likes without any consideration of Christ to be the king & the judge on the Last Day. Or, everyone might have adopted an ideology to be his/her guide without taking into consideration all of its harmful implications/effects. Sadly, our current world has put itself & its ideology above Jesus’ teachings & Commandments of love. It has made itself to be the king/queen & replaced Jesus’ teachings & Commandments of love with its own ideology. I wonder how our current world feel about today’s feast of Christ the King & its spiritual meanings.

My dear brothers & sisters, is Jesus Christ your king or someone else is? Are you following our current world & making yourself to be the king/queen of your life? And have you truly embraced Jesus’ teachings & Commandments of love or adopted an ideology to be the guide of your life? I hope we all would be honored to have Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd & our BFF. That way we will not feel lost & lonely in this world & will be able to stand tall & look at Jesus in the eyes on the Last Day.