

HOMILY FOR OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE 2021

“Yes, I am a king.”

With those words, Jesus revealed his respect for civil authority. A king respects the law and the Romans were respected by Jesus as Israel’s authority at that time. It was Jesus who made the statement, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.”

Jesus respected Pilate’s authority to ask the question and to receive a response. As the civil authority, Rome appointed kings. Herod had been appointed by Rome so it was important for Pilate to realise that Jesus was being appointed by an even greater authority. It would certainly have thrown Pilate. Interestingly, it is only in the last year or so that I learnt that our current monarchy works in the same way as Rome. The British Parliament will have to give their assent to replacing Queen Elizabeth II on the throne.

You can imagine the outcome if a person stood before the British Parliament and declared that he was a king and had been appointed by a higher authority. Boris Johnson would be perturbed and the security detail would jump into action. Now you can understand a little more of why Pilate was so troubled.

Rulers are typically obvious in their duties. A problem for Pilate, was that the kingly role of Jesus was not so apparent, just as it is not completely apparent to us at present. There are however, many, many signs.

For instance, some of the signs of Jesus’ royal character are that he is a descendant of David; he is recognised as a king by the star seen by the wise men from foreign nations; he enters Jerusalem on a colt, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah of a king coming on a donkey; he was crowned with thorns, anticipating the glorious crown to come at his resurrection.

He was acknowledged as the Christ – a royal title. These are just to name a few. Prophecies abound of the Christ becoming the universal king.

The first reading refers to the ‘Son of Man’ – a title of God’s chosen which we, and Scripture know, is Jesus Christ.

Daniel’s vision was of a chosen one receiving heavenly authority as the king of all peoples, nations and languages. This sovereignty becomes eternal and shall never pass, nor will this empire be destroyed. Jesus never referred to himself as the King of the Jews but, he did call himself a king. To be just the king of the Jews would have been too limiting.

Again, nothing of Jesus Christ’s reign is apparent – there are only signs but, you cannot believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and deny his eternal authority.

The only reason we could deny Jesus as the universal king would be to mistrust him as unworthy and therefore disbelieve everything about his divinity. Where would we be, then?

When Jesus speaks of truth, he is speaking about his reliability. In the Scriptures, ‘truth’ is always founded in God.

'Truth' reveals the mind and personality of God. Jesus said to Pilate that he came to bear witness to the 'truth'. Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus called himself The Way, The Truth and The Life. He declared himself as the revelation of God's mind and personality. He revealed his authority when he said to Pilate. "All who are on the side of truth, listen to my voice."

Jesus is a king whose kingdom is not of this world but, thankfully, this world is becoming a part of his kingdom. As the faithful ones who have already received our kingly characteristic at our Baptism, we listen to Jesus. The second reading says, "God loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood, and made us a line of kings, priests to serve his God and father."

As this world continues to carry on with its pain, cruelty and refusal to put God at its centre, thankfully, and out of love, God continues to put this world at God's centre. God has placed the Universal King into our midst. The signs are there. We just need the faith to trust it.