

Homily – Brian Cordeiro – Christ the King – 111119-20

When we start a project, it helps greatly if we have the ultimate goal in mind. Students, who are at the beginning of a school course, keep before their eyes the degree that they will be receive or the job that that will be able to obtain as a result of their efforts. Parent who work hard for so many years and sacrifice for their children, have the final good and wellbeing of their children in mind. We work hard in our younger days so that we can have enough put away by the time we retire. On this last day of our liturgical year our readings focus on the final goal and thus provide us with enough motivation to carry on in our struggle along the way.

Today's readings remind us of 2 facts that await us in the next world. The first is that we follow a King. Christ is a king and even though he came to earth in all humility, He is still very much a King. His kingdom is not of this world, but it will come to pass at the end of time. The second fact is that there will be a judgment and the sheep will be separated from the goats. Though we have a loving God, in the end, there will be a judgment.

What kind of king do we have? In recent times, so many kingdoms and leaders have been toppled. Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and the countries of Yemen and Bahrain have experienced great turmoil. All these regimes were characterised by oppression and violence. What keeps people faithful to a king is the knowledge that they have a king who earns and deserves their respect. Like Christ our King. Our king is more like a loving shepherd.

He guides and protects us like a shepherd guides and protects his sheep. He connects with his sheep one on one. He searches for them, he seeks them out, and he does not want to lose any of them. How many of us have had periods when we strayed away from God and we needed that God literally come after us? Not only does He come after us but He binds us up and strengthens us. He nurses our wounds and heals us. Like a loving mother, does our king take care of us.

But there will be a judgement. The second reading to the Corinthians tells us that there will be at the end the reign of our king when He will overcome all other kingdoms and put them under his feet. He will overcome all his enemies and the last enemy that he will overcome is death.

When the time of final judgement come, the sheep will be separated from the goats, the good people from the evil. Christ lives in each of his people and the way we will be judged will be based on how we were generous with our fellowmen-generous with our time, talent and money. In so far as you did this to the least of my brethren, you did it to me.

One such saint, who recognized the kingship of Jesus is St Thomas More. Thomas More was a brilliant lawyer and diplomat in 16th century England. His patriotism and loyalty to the throne attracted the attention of King Henry VIII who made him Lord Chancellor of England, the first layperson to be entrusted with such an honourable responsibility. What Henry VIII did not know was that loyal as More was to him, his first loyalty was to Christ the only true king. When Henry VIII, therefore, decided to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon, marry Anne Boleyn, and make himself head of the Church of England, More thought this was not right.

Rather than approve what he believed to be against the divine will, he resigned from his prestigious and wealthy position as Lord Chancellor and lived a life of poverty.

Because he would not give his support to the king, More was arrested, convicted of treason, imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1534 and beheaded in July of the following year. On his way to public execution, More encouraged the people to remain steadfast in the faith. His last recorded words were: "I die the king's good servant, but God's first." For More, it was not simply enough to confess Christ privately in the safety of one's heart and one's family; one must also confess him in one's business and professional life as well as in the laws and policies that govern society.

This does not mean that the kingship of Christ is necessarily a threat to the kingdoms of the world. This was the thinking of Pontius Pilate when he was interrogating Jesus to ascertain whether Jesus was a king. Jesus' answer was that, yes, he was indeed a king, but not the sort of king he had in mind. **"My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here"** (John 18:36).

Wherein lies the difference between the kingship of Christ and that of Pilate and other kings of this world? We can name three: (1) Other kingdoms have territorial boundaries but the kingship of Christ is universal. Christ is king without borders. (2) Other kingdoms come and go, but the kingship of Christ is eternal. (3) Other kingdoms are sustained by military power, but the kingship of Christ is sustained by the power of truth. Citizens of Christ's kingdom must, therefore, stand by the truth even when it is hurting and embarrassing to do so.

When we speak about the kingdom of God in this way, some people ask: what then becomes of patriotism and national loyalty? Patriotism and national loyalty certainly have their place in the Christian life, but loyalty to God comes first. In the name of patriotism and national loyalty some Christians have surrendered their consciences to the state. If the state says it is lawful, then it is all right to do it.

A good example is abortion. Or, if the state says it is illegal, then it is wrong to do it. An example is helping an "illegal" immigrant. Today's celebration challenges us to do better than that: to look more critically at the laws and policies governing public life and examine them against the light of the law of Christ. As Christians we should be loyal citizens of our countries, but loyal citizens of God's kingdom first.

I read a very disturbing statistic this past week. It stated that in the past 10 years, the top 10% have grown richer by 275%, while the bottom 20% have improved by only 18%. What disparity. We, as disciples of Christ the King, bring His kingdom to earth when we are true to our Christian values, when we take care of those who are weak, of those who are not protected. Every time we fight for justice we bring God's kingdom down here to earth. When we offer food and drink to those who are hungry and thirsty, we are serving our King Jesus. Even in the most impossible situations, we can count on the help of our Lord and King.