

**FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING,      26-11-2017      ROYAL POWER**

One of the most privileged moments I have with people is when I have the opportunity to prepare first-time parents for the Baptism of their first child. It gives me an opportunity to talk about the gift their child is to receive in Baptism and to explain the meaning of the various parts of the Baptism ceremony, and why they are important. One of these items is the anointing of the head with the Oil of Chrism, where they are anointed as Priest, Prophet and King. Explaining the anointing as King, I talk about this royal power, firstly as the power to say no to temptation, to overcome the sinfulness that is an almost inevitable part of our life. But I also talk about the royal power to serve.

Unfortunately, many of our fairy tales involving royalty speak about the royal power to boss people around, - to make one's authority felt, and we have many examples of that in real life as well, - forgetting that that side of royal power is to face and overcome evil, while the far more important side of that power is to serve, to work for the good of people.

A wonderful contemporary example of that is Queen Elizabeth of England, whose dedication to her royal duties, as consoler, encourager and supporter of those in distress or working for a good cause, is legendary. Her reason for that dedication is not hard to find, for she openly professes that she finds her motivation and her strength in her faith and in Christ.

It is our readings today which focus on this royal power to serve as well. In the main reading our attention is drawn to the story where, in the final judgment, the whole of humanity will stand before God's throne to be judged on how well they cared for each other, especially the least among us.

But let's not forget the second reading where St. Paul reminds us "that just as all men die in Adam, so will all be brought to life in Christ". It is Christ's love that has brought us the life of grace we now enjoy, and that gives us hope of sharing his eternal glory.

In listening to the Gospel a very sobering thought could be the fact that it is the whole of humanity which will stand before God's throne, from Adam to the last man or woman alive, from cavemen and women to rocket

scientists, from animal worshipers to Christians, Jews Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and whatever else you care to name, - athletes, rock-stars, lawyers, politicians, teachers as well as dictators, drug pushers, child abusers and so on.

All of us will have to appear before Jesus of Nazareth, and basically it is the same question that will be asked of all of us: "How well did you care for one another, especially the least?"

It is a question that can be asked of all people, no matter what their background, for God's goodness is part of what God has created in all of us. It is there just as much in the Aborigines who came to Australia 60,000 years or more ago, as it is in us today, who have had the opportunity to listen to God's message of love given us in his Son, Jesus Christ, - an opportunity which gives us the greater responsibility because we enjoy the privilege of having Christ's word and example to guide us.

How well are we responding to that goodness which God has created in us? We all reach out to others to some extent, but how much of it is really self-less, self-giving, and how much is rejection, refusal or deliberate blindness?

We have before us, therefore, a truly majestic and challenging parable. It is first of all, about Jesus Christ, the judge of history, of all history and every person's history. It is also about responsibility for another in body or in spirit as the most reliable thermometer of our loyalty to Christ. And, finally, it is about the stark truth that we will be separated from God not only for doing wrong, but also for doing nothing. "Whatever you do to the least of these, you are doing to Me. What you failed to do for them, you failed to do for Me." With these words the teaching of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel comes to an end.

They are words that are both comforting and disturbing because they teach us that the proof of how much we love the Lord, of how much He is alive in us, is found **not** in spiritual theatrics, but in how we treat others around us.

Are we willing to see Christ in them, Christ in need? And willing to be Christ to them, even when we can't? We have the royal power to do so!!