

Homily by Fr. Anthony Davis

"Viva Cristo Rey!" ["Long live Christ the King!"]

November 22, 2020

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Ezk 34:11-12, 15-17; I Cor 15:20-26, 28; Mt 25:31-46

This feast challenges us to see Christ the King in everyone, especially those whom our society considers the least important, and to treat each person with the same love, mercy, and compassion Jesus showed. This means that Christ is a “King-Servant” who goes about in disguise as the poor, the sick, the cripples, the tortured, the marginalized. So today we hear these familiar words in the Sacred Scripture, from the Responsorial Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Perhaps many people of faith, both Christians and Jews alike, are drawn to the phrase, “I shall not want”. After all, who among us wants to be in need? Certainly not a young couple beginning their married life, or an elderly man or woman facing an uncertain future on a fixed income, or a family placing themselves in peril as they seek a new life in a new country? Those among us at this crucial time impacted by this Global Pandemic, who are ill, want to know our needs are taken care of. And those who struggle with depression want to believe we are secure. Thus saying “I shall not want” is one thing, but knowing the source of such security is another. And that’s precisely, what this solemnity of Christ the King is about!!!

We may have the tendency to think of God as a kind of a rich uncle (Santa Claus) who gives us treats, or as a solemn judge (Uncle Sam) with an iron fist, who threatens, and whips us in line. But our readings today rather tell a different story, describing God as a “Good Shepherd”. That is to say, by this feast of Christ the King, the Church reminds us that Jesus, the very Son of God, is not like the other kings/emperors/demagogues we read about in the history books. He doesn’t stand aloof, only allowing his subjects to speak if spoken to. Christ exercises his leadership as a servant, as among the lowest of those who serve-the shepherds who tend their flocks under harsh desert conditions and are responsible to preserve their flocks, and even to love and sacrifice for them.

What do then make of the gospel account today? How are we to understand this judgement scene where the Son of Man assembles all the nations, and separates the sheep from the goats? At a glance, it sounds like a despotic king ruling with an iron hand, who judges his subjects based solely on keeping their end of the bargain. But if we take a closer look, we will understand clearly that Jesus is instructing us all believers on what it means to citizens of the kingdom of God, where Christ is the King.

This is a lesson about our putting into action the very intentions of God in the world where we live; a lesson about knowing the difference between security and insecurity, and between needs and wants. Our giving food and drink to the hungry and thirsty, by means of a “Stimulus Package”, is God’s way of assuring us all that our needs are met. Our welcoming the stranger is God’s acting in us to provide security. Our providing clothing for the naked and caring for the ill is God’s way of meeting needs right here in our midst. And visiting those in prison, in person or through programs that are restorative, is God’s very provision for the needs of society. “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me,” says the Lord. "Viva Cristo Rey!" ["Long live Christ the King!"]

Although Emperors and Kings now exist mostly in history books, we still honor Christ as the King of the Universe by enthroning him as King in our hearts and allowing him to take control of our lives. Therefore, when we accept Jesus as the King of our lives, then everyone and everything else falls into its proper place. We are also challenged to find Christ the King in everyone around us. As loyal subjects of Christ the King, we are invited to treat others with justice and compassion as Jesus did, especially those whom we consider the least important. "Viva Cristo Rey!" ["Long live Christ the King!"]