

**HOMILY**  
**FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING**

November 25, 2007

Each year as we come to the end of our Liturgical Year, the Church invites us to celebrate this great feast of Christ the King at the end of our yearly cycle of feasts and festivals that have celebrated different events in the life of Jesus, Mary, and the other Saints. We are reminded that Jesus Christ is Lord and King.

“Jesus is Lord” was the early Christians first creed. On that belief is based our Christian Faith. Proclaiming Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is the heart of Christianity. It is also a pretty incongruous thing. We think of a King as having power and control, dominion over his subjects. Yet, Jesus never held political office, had no special academic degrees, and no cultural influences. He died at age 30 on an instrument of fools, as a common criminal.

Today’s feast puts us in touch with the sublime incongruity upon which all Christianity rests. Paul’s letter to the Colossians, along with the beginning of John’s Gospel, is the strongest statement made about Jesus in the Bible. Listen again to what he says: “He is the image of the invisible of God.” Want to see God? - Look at Jesus. Want to know what God is like? – Look at Jesus.

“In Him were created all things in heaven and on earth – visible and invisible. Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers – all were created through and for Him. He is before all things; in Him all things hold together. He is the head and body of the Church, the beginning, the Alpha and Omega – every letter in between. In Him, all fullness was pleased to dwell.”

This is high praise if I’ve ever heard it. Jesus is the Word who governs all things.

King of Kings  
Lord of Lords  
God of Gods

Now the Gospel provides a shocking transition. Keeping all that we last said in mind, lets move ahead to Luke’s Gospel, and where do we find this King of Kings? In a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem in 30 A.D. – that’s what Golgotha was – a dump where they executed common criminals.

We find a young man pinned to a cross in His death agony surrounded by a brutal band of soldiers who specialized in putting prisoners to death. His followers had abandoned Him. He is alone – stripped naked – pinned to the cross.

The ruler sneered at him. “*He saved others ..... save himself*”. Soldiers jeered at Him, made fun of Him, giving Him their sour wine. “*Save yourself.*” “*King of the Jews?*” People shook their heads and laughed.

Alone      Abandoned      Suffering      Forgotten      Dying      Mocked

This is the one that Paul is talking about. This is the Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the beginning, middle, and end of all creation. This is the icon – Son of the Invisible God.

What a strange reality that is the basis of our religion: a King on a Cross.

The cross reminds us that our notion of Kingship is sadly lacking. We have a mistaken idea of what power, majesty, Lordship are all about. We think of Kingship and power as the ability to save yourself. If you have enough money, you can save yourself from all sorts of inconvenience; if you have political influence, you can save yourself from getting in trouble; if you have cultural power, you can save yourself. We think a King should be able to protect himself from just about anything.

What Jesus Christ, the King, tells us is that a true king is not one who saves self, but who forgets self in a simple act of love. A true King does not fill himself up with possessions or surround himself with protection, but empties himself with love.

What is power? What is Kingship? Look at Jesus – the icon of the invisible God – and we see it is not what we expect.

Our notion of power has been distorted through sin. Saint Augustine said that sin is the separation of love from power. Remember Adam and Eve? They had it all; they lived happily with a balance of power and love, but they wanted MORE power – to be like God. Sin entered the world and a distorted view of power came with it.

With the coming of Jesus, the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, one in whom all power rests, - Love becomes incarnate; - Love becomes a helpless child; - Love becomes a life of giving self away; - Love becomes a life lived in love, poured out for others; - Love becomes a King on a cross.

Self-emptying love is the ultimate power. Gandhi did through non-violent love what years of war and force could never accomplish. Martin Luther King transformed American society with this non-violent love and uprooted institutional violence through the power of love. John Paul II faced down what I grew up seeing as the “evil empire of Communism” with the power of the simple acts of love.

Jesus, our King on the Cross-, does what no amount of force or fear could ever do. He saves us from sin, from the separation of power and love, and in the great act of power and love, which is the Cross-, transforms the world.

Let us pray on this feast of Christ the King that our lives will be transformed, and we will see this great transforming power in simple acts of love.