

The Solemnity of Christ The King! So why are we here tonight and what exactly are we celebrating? A question I have been asking myself over the past several weeks.

In all honesty I have no idea. My research tells me that this is a recent holiday, having been instituted by Pope Pius the 11th in December 1925, and originally having been celebrated the last Sunday in October, right before the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls. This was right after the First World War when the ruling dynasties of Europe were displaced and democracy was taking hold. Here in the US it was the roaring 20's, a time of excess and debauchery, low moral values as it may be. The Church and its political clout in Europe were in decline. The Panacea for this inconceivable turn of events? A new holy day to celebrate the Kingship of Jesus and originally a holy day of the highest order.

We are so accustomed to saying Jesus Christ, that I wonder how many people believe Christ to be a surname rather than a title. Jesus "The Christ". If it were possible to define the meaning and implication of Christ, it could be considered the King of Kings, maybe the alpha

and the omega, as read in the 1st reading. Christ has a difficult meaning, but it is much more than king. Interesting that in his anxiety over changes in the world as he knew it, Pope Pius derived a holiday to celebrate Jesus and yet conferred on him a lesser status in doing so. Nevertheless this did serve the purpose of reinforcing the idea of Kingdom's and dynasties, and specifically God's Kingdom, with Jesus as it's King.....and the spokesperson for this Ultimate Kingdom, the conduit to mere mortals? Yup, Il Papa, Pius the 11th. He may have lost the Christian Monarchs, but he gained God's Kingdom.

Today's readings reinforce this idea of Kingship as understood in Ancient times, and certainly in 1925. The King ruled their land, their property and people were property. Not a democracy but a Monarchy, no voice or power for the people, Ultimate unquestioned authority. In the first reading today, Daniel, there is "one like a human being...given dominion and glory and Kingship, all people, nations and languages shall serve him". Hmmmm, serve him? Dominion....sovereignty, a realm of power. Serve him or obey Him?

In Revelation “Jesus Christ, the ruler of the kings of the earth to him glory and dominion forever” and, referencing back to Daniel “He is coming with the clouds.’ The two readings appear to be referencing 1 and the same deity.

In tonight’s Gospel Jesus stops short of calling himself a king. He does say that his Kingdom is not of this world and further that Pilate says He is a King and for this He was born and came into this world, yet he does not say I am a King, I am the King of the Jews. He allows Pilate to make his own decision.

I find the first 2 readings to embody what I believe we are supposed to be celebrating this evening. Christ as King, sovereign, a ruler. It may just be the multiple references to the term Dominion and the connotations for me of domination, of the expectation to serve, not out of love or desire but at the command of others. To obey without question, not to be a human being, but a human doing at the whim of another.

Was this Pope Pius’ intention when creating the Solemnity of Christ the King? I am not able to ask him directly, obviously, but my

gut instinct says “YES!” The Church was in decline, the Christian monarchs were displaced and his power was ebbing away, thus a measure to insure his sovereignty, a reminder to the people that they needed him and his Church as a conduit to the Kingdom of heaven. Does it really matter that in the process The Christ becomes somewhat trivialized?

In the years since, the concept of Kings and monarchies have evolved somewhat and become memories or a novelty act in the United Kingdom, but even there the rule of law is democracy and the Royal Family are figureheads and ceremonial décor without any authority. The Holy day was actually downgraded to a Simple feast day after the 2nd World War and then in 1969, re-elevated to a Solemnity and given a new permanent berth on the Liturgical Calendar as the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year. There are those that believe this should be a day to reflect over all we have heard over the past year and to celebrates Christ’s Kingdom.

Advent starts next week, a new Liturgical Year, we will once again be reminded of Gabriel’s visit to Mary and the Immaculate

Conception, of her journey with her husband, Joseph, a carpenter by trade and of the birth of the Christ Child, God Incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth. A time of celebration and anticipation; a season of joy. Then the Lenten season and the fulfillment of prophecies such as we heard tonight in Daniel, and the conversation we heard in tonight's Gospel between Pilate and Jesus. Then the stories, 33 weeks of stories, of Jesus' life and work here on this earth.

Yes, Jesus' work; his work with the poor, the sick, the less fortunate, the outcasts and the ostracized. Jesus' time on earth was spent being of service, he was a rabbi.....a teacher and a minister and he served others out of deep profound love and compassion. He taught tolerance and understanding and forgiveness.

That, my friends, is what I believe today is about. I think this is a time for us to reflect on Jesus' work and ministry. He referred to himself as a servant of God and led by example, he was a leader not a ruler. We acknowledged His Ascension some months back and it is a tenet of our Faith that he is seated at the right hand of God, though does God actually have hands/ But the symbolism is there.

Jesus led a life of love and of service to others and asked his friends to do the same. Once again I find myself asking, what was Jesus trying to do? He was showing his friends and followers how to be true Christians, though in actuality better Jews. He was not concerned with laws and rules and procedure, but in loving one another, of compassion and tolerance, forgiveness, sharing one's wealth and joy and sorrow and being of service and in doing so we serve him and love him. I think this holy day has been misnamed, my vote is for "The Solemnity of Christ the Person.", Jesus never called himself a King, while doing his work, his ministry. He was a humble man, A great man, a rabbi, a minister, a teacher, a healer.....He was and is The Christ, not King Jesus, but Jesus the Christ; an exceptional person, a person of love. As we go out into our lives this week and celebrate Thanksgiving and begin the "holiday season" let us remember what we are truly celebrating, let us bring Christ with us. As we feast with others, or help serve the less fortunate on 125th street let us bring Jesus to others and celebrate his life. As we begin the

Eucharistic celebration this evening let us bring the person of Christ to each other. I think we could do him no greater honor.