

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING: NOVEMBER 20, 2022

A young father tells of his four year old daughter who has been in love with Disney Princesses. Together they have watched one film at least three times and, each time, the girl asks Daddy, "Is she going to be alright?" Personally I am not big into Kings, Queens and Princess but, obviously, they hold great imagery for many people including little children.

It is the image of royalty that grabs many people. People flocked by the thousands to take part in the burial rituals surrounding Queen Elizabeth. My Irish grandfather has noted on his immigration form that he was a subject of Queen Victoria. (Hmph!)

All of this royal imagery has been applied to Jesus. He is pictured with a gold crown, majestic robes, scepter and orb and hordes of loyal subjects. However, when we turn to the gospels the image of Jesus is quite different. No crown but a crown of thorns. No throne but a wooden cross on which he is executed as a criminal. Jesus is rejected by religious and civil authorities. The gospel portrays an apparently impotent Christ: defeated in the eyes of the world and dying in the sight of an impotent or uncaring God. In his naked, scourged body he is humiliated and disgraced. From his cross he pardons a God-fearing criminal who shared his sentence. Somehow, the latter, more than any other man, grasped a portion of Jesus' own faith. Flying in the face of appearances and reason itself the man said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Remember me, Jesus. These are our words that we pray as we gather at this Eucharist to share the cross with Jesus. With all the innocent who suffer I turn to Jesus to remember me. And what does he ask us? To remember him. "Do this in memory of me" he says as we take bread and wine and remember his death and resurrection, his becoming one with us, not as a King far above us but as a human being who is one with us and invites us to share paradise with him.

We all share in the kingship of Jesus. When we are baptized, even as infants, each of us was anointed with oil – the holy chrism - using the same image of the rite that anointed David and other kings in biblical Israel. But we have to learn, through the knocks of life, that this kingship is not to enhance our ego but rather

to pour out ourselves with Jesus in caring for all of God's people who suffer with Jesus.

On the solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, let us remember the real Jesus: rejected and mocked, he was powerless to stop the violence. Let us remember that he reigned through active love even as he suffered and died. Faith insists that love, embraced by Jesus in his death and resurrection, is the only power capable of overcoming evil. As living images of our God, it is that love, and that love alone, that we are called to remember and make present again.

And here is another thought on the importance of images. I really don't like royal imagery for Jesus. What would I suggest instead? As the apostles and holy women, I would call him Rabbi, teacher. As Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah and those who called people to seek justice, mercy and walk humbly with our God, I would call him prophet. Because he arose very early to pray and spent nights on the mountain top in silent prayer, I call him mystic. Because he became one with us, I would call him my brother. Because he told us that he is our friend, I would call him friend. I can do quite well without calling him a King.

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