

November 25, 2012

Christ the King - Cycle B

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. And so, we have to listen though, because some people like to make this into something it is not. So we listen to the Gospel today and Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world." So we can't ever make this world the Kingdom of God. We have tried throughout the ages. And there are other religions who like to try to make their religion the kings of the world but that are not it. The Church has gotten most of its trouble when we grab for power and royal, you know power over people. That's not what God called us to. That's not what the Church is ever supposed to be. This isn't a theocracy. We are not called to make the United States of America a Christian kingdom. Argue about it all you want but Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." And so we need to make sure we do everything in our power to listen to what Jesus said. But, His kingdom needs to influence the world. And that is where we talk about the morals of truth because He talks about He came to testify the truth. But we are going to come back to that.

Jesus sets up today for us today in the book of Revelation and the Second Reading what His kingdom consists of. It says in the book of Revelation today, it says, "He loves us" and what? "...freed us from our sins by His own blood." That so our King is a God of love and a God who sets us free from our slavery. And so if our God is a God of love and a God that sets free people from their slavery, then we who participate in His kingdom, we who are followers of His, disciples of Him, we who cry out, "Jesus Christ is our Lord and our King," need to be people of love and people who set others free from their slavery. Now to be a person of love, again, I constantly, when I was in Rome it was an easier reality because I had no responsibilities. It drove me insane, but I had no responsibilities. Like I said I had, I didn't get angry once. Can you imagine me not getting angry once? And I hated it. It was just like, here we go, another day. We all get along. No responsibilities. What are we going to do today? Where are we going to eat today? What are we going to drink tonight? Forget it.

But the reality is, while I was there, there were 32 priests together, all different kinds of priests. Out of the 32 of us, nine of them voted for Obama. So, there was a little bit of tension sometimes. Still I didn't get angry. I thought, "Hey, vote for whomever you want. We are a free country. I'm not interested in setting up the kingdom of Christianity or Catholicism in America." So, I'll debate and different things. But we were all called to put each other before ourselves. And that is the struggle because the King of love came and put us first on that cross. He came when we were killing Him, when we were hurting Him, when we were denying Him, when we were spitting against Him, when we were blaspheming Him, He died for us. He put the people who hated Him before Himself. Is that the kind of person I am? Am I person that puts the people who hate me in front of myself? The people who I don't agree with in front of myself, the people of different political parties who I don't agree with, do I love them as Christ would love them or do I judge them as Christ would NOT judge them?

There is always that struggle that when God calls us to is much, much stronger than any kingdom on this earth who'd call us to. He calls us to love our enemies. Do good to those who persecute you. Pray for

those who mishandle you. That is what He calls us to. That is the kind of King He is. And that is the kind of disciple He wants. So the first thing, when I say Jesus is my king, He is the king of love. Do I believe that and do I live that? Or am I trying to live that? None of us here live it perfectly. I don't. I never will. I know, it is the reality. But do I want to? Am I trying to? Am I repenting every time I am not? That is the kind of king we follow. That is the kind of person He wants us to be.

The second thing, what Jesus does is He freed us from our slavery. Now again, when someone is in slavery, we should do everything in our power to set them free, correct? That is what we should do. When a person sins, Jesus says, "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin." So everyone who sins is a slave. Do we do everything in our power to set them free from their slavery? Now again, we can have good and bad. I was talking to the daily Mass people this past week. I went to confession of course, they had confession every week at the thing, but one day I went to the St. Mary Major and there was a Dominican there. The Dominicans heard confessions. I thought oh I will go to confession. So I knelt down. There was a little thing there and I went to confession. And, the priest yelled at me, not just a little, a lot. And you might sit there and think, "I wonder what Father Larry did to deserve that?" Not much let me give you a hint. But anyway, he yelled at me and then he gave me a Rosary for a penance. I have never given a Rosary to anybody my whole life in penance, ever. Anyway, so I am mad. I am like grr.

Have you ever listened to my Confessions CD? On the old one it says, "If a priest ever yells at you in confession and you are really sorry, what should you say? Father, go to hell. And walk on out." I did not take my own advice. I sat there and said, "Thank you Father," and I walked out. But I thought, you know what if I wasn't who I was I would never come back to the Catholic Church. I wouldn't come back. Because here I was, sorry for my sins, quite aware of my own sinfulness, quite aware of where my own struggles always are, and I was coming to him to look for someone who was going to help me set me free and put me on the right direction and the only thing he did was make me mad. He wasn't coming to set me free. He was coming to push his own agenda of what he thought I was to be, completely rejected. Now some people say in all humility I should have accepted it. Well, I did but when I prayed about it, it wasn't of God. It just wasn't.

So when we are dealing with people who don't agree with us, people who are in slavery, do we do everything in our power to set them free from that or do we do everything in our power to just judge them? To sit there and say yep, you are not holding up. Yeah, ... and we do it all of the time. We love to judge each other and of course when there are people who don't agree with us, and we are the really Christian holy people, we justify our judgment, don't we? Well, I agree with the Church. They do not. They are going to hell. And we judge them. That is the easy way out. That is not what God calls us to do. He again on the cross, set us free as we killed Him. Are we the same type people? Again, that has to be where our goal is. That doesn't mean that is where we are now. But at least that is what I am working towards. That is where I am going. That is what I need to repent of when I am not that way.

And then when we deal with all of that, we come to the last part that Jesus talks about today in the Gospel. He said He was born to what? To testify to the truth. There is objective truth. The objective truth is of course that God exists and He loves us. That is the most objective of all truth. Now, in the midst of that objective reality, there are a lot of small t's in there. But, the ultimate objective truth is

that God exists, that God is love, and that He loves us. And so we need to testify to that reality by the way we live our daily life. So, does the way I live my daily life... do I objectify... do I testify to the truth? Not objectify, testify, do I testify to the truth by the way I am living. And again, some people say no. Some people say yes.

Again, while I was in Italy and we would do all of this stuff my favorite part was when I went to Assisi. I had this five day retreat in Assisi. And they have there the port, you know Porziuncola. And there St. Francis, when he was there, he went to the Holy Father and he says, "Grant me a request." He says that everyone that comes through the doors of the port will be free from all sin. And the Holy Father says, "For how long?" St. Francis says, "I am not concerned about time. I am concerned about souls." So He says, "Okay, for the rest of time." So when you go to this little port inside the church, it is beautiful. The entrance way, you walk in there and it says, "This is a holy place." Just like here but then you go beyond that and it says, "This is the door to eternal life." This is the door to eternal life.

And so to go in there and not walk out the same, that the truth of God, it that God has come and He loves us and He wants to set us free from that which enslaves us. That is the truth. And when we fight about all those other truths in our lives, truths that are important, truth that you can't kill babies, truth that God is real, truth that there is right and there is wrong. We must fight for those truths. But the ultimate truth is God is love and that He loves us and He came to set us free. And that we need to be willing to die for. And that we need to be willing to testify every day by the way we live. So at the end of this church year, let's focus on our lives for a moment. Is this the type of man or woman that I am? Is this the type of man or woman that I want to be? And if not, let's focus on the new Church year. And let's make some New Year's Resolutions, God make me more loving. God let me want to set people free instead of judging them. God may I live every day testifying to the truth of who you are. You got it? Get it? Going to live it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.