

## Solemnity of Christ the King

To 21<sup>st</sup> century ears the title Christ the King can seem at least a little awkward or even paternalistic, so instead of using Christ the King, let's use the phrase the reign of Christ or the reign of God which is more dynamic and active. This can remind us that Christ hasn't left us on our own to observe the 'rules of the kingdom', rather he has stayed with us, enabling us to be his witnesses in the world. Hopefully, people will experience in us the loving presence of a new kind of leader, one from humble origins, who proclaimed the reign of God, not by military power but by washing feet. When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom he wasn't describing a geographical area, or a physical nation, not even a group of people. The kingdom of God is the reign and mercy of God, and Jesus' reign is that of a servant leader who sought to get people to think about how they treated one another and to open their lives for the indwelling of God because the true location of the kingdom of God is within each one of us.

At first sight the gospel passage chosen for today might seem unusual. The context is Jesus being brought before Pilate just before his crucifixion. Pilate was the Roman Governor and when the Jews were celebrating one of their major festivals, and there was none greater than Passover, he would come to Jerusalem with his soldiers to make sure there was no trouble. Our passage begins with Pilate's question – "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus responds with a question – "Do you ask this of your own accord or have others spoken to you about me?" Pilate then asks two more questions – "Am I a Jew?" The inference being no, and "What have you done?" To which Jesus tells him that his kingdom is not of this world, so Pilate says, "You are a king then" which allows Jesus to answer, 'Yes I am a king, I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth, and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.'

Pilate questions the very notion of truth and being a pragmatist, although he believed Jesus to be innocent, he listened to other voices which spoke of an uprising against the Roman occupying forces if Jesus was freed, and he couldn't risk that, so he handed Jesus over to be crucified. This feast reminds us that we have a responsibility of trying to bring about Jesus' kingdom where peace, justice, truth and love are concrete signs that Jesus reigns in the world. Many of the world's earthly rulers dominate by force, violence and economic exploitation. Jesus' power comes from a very different and holier source, and it calls us to be counter cultural. While the world's rulers draw the lines of their power on a map, Jesus draws his on the human heart.

Jesus' kingdom is with us now and we have through our baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit been given the vision to see the presence of the kingdom where there is equality, respect and dialogue. Where each person's gifts are recognised, the poor and the neglected are empowered and no-one is left out, and where justice is given to each regardless of their political influence, race, gender or economic status. No wonder one of the petitions in the Our Father is 'thy kingdom come', and the good news is that we can do something to bring it about!

## Bidding Prayers for Christ the King

Celebrant:

Let us pray for the needs of the world and the Church so that the reign of God will be seen by all.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church may minister to all people with integrity and truth.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders of nations – that they will understand that there is a greater power which does not belong to this earth.

Lord in your mercy

For our young people – that they will live by the truth believing in Jesus' promise that the truth will set them free.

Lord in your mercy

For those in our parish who will be preparing for the Sacraments of First Forgiveness, Holy Communion and Confirmation – that their parents and the parish community will support them in their journey of faith..

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Covid19 pandemic and, Farrell Brookes, Betty Gregson, Joseph Shyne, Harry Howarth, Thomas McDaid and Robert Heught whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we make our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God, your Son shows us the truth that real power resides in the cross. As we help each other to carry our crosses may we come to share in the fullness of your glory and live in your heavenly kingdom forever. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen