

kingdom

The Feast of Christ the King is a relatively modern holy day on the church calendar, having been instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925, as an effort to curb growing secularism. It was designed to highlight the "kingship" of Jesus during a time when the kingdoms of the world were turning away from religion. However, the "kingship" of Jesus of Nazareth is quite a different form of institution than what we normally think of when it comes to "kings."

In the Gospel lesson (John 18:33-37) we find Jesus standing before the Roman official in charge of Palestine: Pontius Pilate. Pilate was the local representative of the Roman Emperor. Pilate asks Jesus if he is a king, and we see Jesus challenge Pilate's notion of what a king is. In Pilate's ears though, these words are treason, for the only "king" was Caesar. This was part of the grounds for Jesus' sentence of death.

In the lesson from Revelation (Revelation 1:4b-8) we see John beginning his book with a regal description of Jesus - who he would soon describe as on a throne. But, the highlight of this passage on this day is the assertion that he "made us to be a kingdom." The Church, the gathering of the faithful are a kingdom here to serve our King. John's Book of Revelation is largely composed of visions, but this is his introduction to these visions. He offers these visions up to the kingdom.

In the Hebrew Bible lesson from the Book of Daniel (Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14) we get one of the great biblical glimpses into the heavenly throne room. Fiery flames, turning wheels, thousands and thousands, ten thousands and ten thousands - it's quite dramatic! The key here, beyond the pyrotechnics, is that this king's reign is forever, and his kingdom encompasses all peoples, nations, and languages.

In the Hebrew Bible lesson from 2 Samuel (2 Samuel 23:1-7) we find King David's last words. What an apt figure to see in stark contrast to the kingship of God. Here is this figure who had so much promise, but who had let so many people down. And now, as his life ends he humbly reflects on his legacy and the eternal legacy of God who "is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning."

Prayer

Christ our King, as countless throngs of angels and archangels stand before your throne offering you praise and thanksgiving, we join our voices with them today, tomorrow, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

On the way to "soccer practice"...

We don't live in a "kingdom" with an established monarchy, and even then most countries which do have monarchies have seen them reduced over the past centuries to not much more than figure-head positions. Is there another, perhaps more contemporary metaphor we could use here that might reach people today?

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