

Homily 26th November
Christ, the servant king

I couldn't help but notice there's more people sitting on the left-hand side of church than on the right hand - and the goats are on the left - I'd swap sides if I were you! But anyway, after listening to that Gospel, I think I'm alright because I fed a homeless man with a bacon sandwich today. So, I'm saved. What about you? This feast, is a relatively modern feast, created by Pope Pius XI in 1925. However, I think Jesus, when he walked upon this earth would have been appalled to have been called Christ the King. It would have horrified Him. Indeed, in the Gospels, it actually says that on one of His visits - preaching tours - the people wanted to make Him King, but He slipped from their sight to prevent them doing this. For Jesus, kingship, in His era, meant oppression and power over others. It was everything He was against.

And yet, and yet, when Jesus came with His message -the Gospel - very soon after His death and resurrection, a slightly different message was preached. We see it there in Saint Paul, and that first letter to the Corinthians was the first letter written by Saint Paul that we have surviving, written around 50 to 55 AD - only 20 years after these events.

Saint Paul's letters were all written long before a Gospel got written, and we see that the preaching of the Church was becoming different from the message of Jesus. Not that they'd lost the message of Jesus, that did get preserved in the Gospels written by His witnesses, who captured the essence of His teaching. But what was preached later, was the messenger, not the message.

They preached Jesus as Saviour of the world - which He is, whereas, Jesus preached about the kingdom and the values of the kingdom. The later writers could see in the events that had happened, that everything had been transformed. And so, of course, their understanding of that status and dignity of Jesus was comparable with an earthly king - which Jesus always resisted - 'My Kingdom is not of this world.'

And I think there's a message for us here somewhere, because I think the message is about us, and I say that very distinctly because I can talk from my own experience. A lot of people, when they're young have ideals and I was one of them, (I went off to seminary, full of zeal for the cause,) and I put the emphasis firmly on the message. I think I've told you before that I even used to go to church as a teenager, to rub my parents faces in it because they were lapsed. It was all about proving a point.

Then the very scary thing is, and I think it is scary when I look at myself, that, as you get older, if you develop some wisdom, you realize it's both the message AND the Messenger that's important. We're all meant to be messengers in the world, witnessing to Christ. Because the messenger is meant to become the message. Certainly, when you look at Jesus, He was the message of the Gospel, wasn't he? And we're meant to emulate Him. We, the messengers, are meant to be the message incarnate. The important point of today's feast is that we give glory to the Messenger, by putting into practice, and living THE MESSAGE.

Pope John Paul II -Saint Pope John Paul II, said, "You know what the world needs above all is witnesses. And if it needs teachers," he said, "then, they're the best teachers if they're also witnesses - witnessing by what they say and do, not just teaching it as a message." And so, this feast of Christ the King and reigning with Him in glory, is about emulating Jesus, the messenger, who became the message. We have to become the message, NOT of ourselves, but of HIM in our daily lives.