

Christ the King-B

November 21, 2021

St. Patrick

We just heard this from the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation: **“To Jesus Christ, who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father—to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”**

A month ago I made my yearly weeklong silent retreat in St. Louis at a retreat center run by the Sisters of Mercy. For daily Mass I went next door to a nursing home/assisted-living facility for retired Sisters of Mercy. Due to the coronavirus, my retreat director had to get permission for me to go to their Mass.

One day the priest who comes for Mass daily got sick. One of the sisters—at least 85-years-old—led a Communion service, preceded by the reading of the Scriptures. After she led the closing prayer, sister then told us, “It says in the New Testament that, because of our baptism, we’re now a priestly, kingly people. Then, I invite you to turn to the person next to you and give them a blessing—carrying out your priestly function.”

Well, everyone did it. The elderly sister in front of me turned around, gave me a blessing, ending with her making the Sign of the Cross over me. (She did it as well as the bishop does!) I made the Sign of the Cross in response to her blessing.

That 85-year-old sister had it right! Jesus our King made **“us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father.”** So we can give one another a blessing, as a priestly, kingly people.” At your Thanksgiving meal—hopefully before every meal—won’t someone lead a prayer of blessing over the food and all gathered there? Yes, because of our baptism, Jesus made us a kingly, priestly people.

So, in this feast’s Gospel, Pilate asked Jesus, **“So you are a king?”** And Jesus let him have it: **“You say that I am a king. For this I was born, for this I came into the world...”**

St. Patrick’s: If Jesus made us a kingly, priestly people...then, we’d better take to heart how St. John’s Gospel tells us what type of king Jesus is.

- As with any king, Jesus wears a crown—a crown of thorns.
- Jesus is adorned with a purple robe—in the same way the emperor does.

- Jesus is “enthroned”—before the soldiers, wrapped in that purple, where he is ridiculed, beaten, and spat upon. And finally, “lifted up” on the cross as his final throne—tacked above his head were these words, “**Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.**”

Indeed, it’s one thing to give a blessing. It’s another to follow him in his kingly reign from the cross.

So, in this feast’s Gospel, Pilate asked Jesus, “**So you are a king?**”

Friends: On this last Sunday of the church’s year, the church sets before us a shocking paradox (1). Christ *our King* is, in his glory of the resurrection, now “enthroned” gloriously at his Father’s right hand. But, *our King* Jesus is as humble as his scandalous death on the cross.

It should shake us as this feast teaches us how we’re to live now as his kingly, priestly people.

(1) I am indebted in this reflection to Lawrence Cunningham, “To Christ the King” in *Give Us This Day—November 2021* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2021), pp. 8-9, at 9.

General Intercessions

November 21, 2021

Christ the King

You, O Christ, are our Truth: open our hearts to hear your voice and live by your truth; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are our one High Priest: lead us to join with you in giving thanks by lives of service and worship; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are our King: direct world leaders—and us as citizens—to make wise judgments in the midst of the pandemic, the refugee crisis and the environmental crisis; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are mercy and justice: make us responsive to the most vulnerable in our midst, and make us steadfast in opposing racism and all bigotry; we pray to you, O Lord—

You are the firstborn of the dead: raise up in the resurrection all who have died with hope, especially Andi Wood, and all those named in the Book of Remembrance during this month of November, (*for the 8:30 a.m. Mass only--*) and for Bill Platten, on the first anniversary of his death; we pray to you, O Lord—

