

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Dn 7:13-14; Ps 93:1,1-2,5; Rv 1:5-8; Jn 18:33-37

IMAGINE JESUS AS A KING

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun

Saturday, November 24, 2018, 5:00 and 7:30 p.m. Masses

Sunday, November 25, 2018, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses

I would like to invite you to use your imagination.

When it comes to Jesus, how do you imagine him, visualize him?

What does he look like?

How old is he?

What is he doing?

And how does that image make you feel?

We are only a month away from Christmas.

One of the most common ways to visualize Jesus is

as a newborn baby lying in the manger (Lk 2:7).

And the feeling? Joy. Happiness. Wonderment.

As Jesus grew up, when he was twelve,

Mary and Joseph took him to Jerusalem (Lk 2:41-42).

A common image of Jesus is

as a young boy with the elders in the Temple,

teaching them and asking them questions (Lk 2:46).

Jesus, the whiz kid, and the feeling is amazement.

Another common image of young Jesus

is in the carpenter's shop with his father Joseph (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)

Jesus, with hammer and saw, as the apprentice,

learning the trade from his father.

Father and son working together.

The feeling: it is heartwarming.

Once Jesus began his public ministry,

a variety of images come to mind:

Jesus on hillside preaching to a big crowd (Mt 5:1);

or Jesus curing someone who is sick (e.g., Mk 1:31,34,41-42; 2:11-12; 3:5);

or Jesus with the little children (Mk 10:13-16).

And the feeling: it is inspiring, impressive, and touching.

And then there are the many images associated with the final hours of Jesus.

Maybe you see Jesus at the dinner table with his disciples at the Last Supper (Lk 22:14-20);

or maybe you seen Jesus kneeling in prayer during his Agony in the Garden (Lk 22:39-46);

or maybe you see Jesus being scourged at the pillar, or carrying his cross (Jn 19:17).

And the most common image of all,
even more common than the baby Jesus lying in the manger,
is Jesus nailed to the Cross (Jn 19:18).
The feeling is somber, sorrowful.

Thankfully, we also have the image of Jesus risen from the tomb.
The feeling is relief; it is grand and glorious.
It is a feeling of triumph and victory.

Now be honest. We're at Mass, right?
How many of you, when it came to visualizing Jesus,
pictured Jesus in your mind as a king?
I would bet that very few did.

When we think about our relationship with Jesus,
maybe we think about Jesus as our friend;
or maybe Jesus as our brother;
or maybe as a wisdom figure,
someone who is all-knowing, our teacher and guide;
or maybe our companion, our traveling partner,
the one who walks with us on the journey of life;
or maybe as our Savior and Redeemer,
the one who has compassion on us and forgives our sins.

Very few people, when asked to come up with a mental image for Jesus,
would see Jesus as a king on a throne (Mt 25:31; Rv 7:9).
Very few people, when asked, what kind of a relationship do you have with Jesus?
would reply, "Jesus is my King."

There are some reasons that Jesus as King is not our first thought.

There are not many kings around these days.
Kings were the usual leaders in ancient times, and in medieval times,
but these days we have presidents and prime ministers.

But there is a second reason that people tend not to think about Jesus as a king.
In general, when people today think about kings, it is not a positive image.

Kings ruled with absolute authority.
The king was in charge; the king was the boss.
The king's word was the law.
The king demanded total obedience.
The king could force people to work, to be his servants.
The king demanded complete loyalty; it was him and nobody else.
If there was a dispute, the king was judge and jury,
and the decision of the king was final.

And frankly, to the average person these days,
the mere thought of a king is irritating.

I don't want anyone bossing me around.
I don't want anyone deciding for me.
I don't want anyone forcing me to do something I don't want to do.
I don't want to give anyone total authority over my life.
I want to think what I want to think, and I want to do what I want to do.

We Americans don't like kings.
That why our ancestors came to America.
It is the land of the free.

So the concept of kingship is not a very popular concept,
and when we think of Jesus, we visualize Jesus in many different ways,
but we usually don't think of his as a king.

Yet today, we celebrate Christ the King.
Jesus is the King of kings (Rv 17:14; 19:16).
Jesus is a King like no other king.
Jesus is seated, exalted, on his throne in heaven (e.g., Rv 5:13; 7:9,17; 21:5; 22:3).
His kingdom encompasses everything, the entire universe:
the sun and the moon, the stars and the planets, outer space;
heaven and earth, and all that dwell on the earth,
including you and me.

Except, we are not all that wild about kings:
we want our independence; we want our freedom.
We want to do things our way,
and we want to be in charge of our lives.
So this feast, Christ the King, is not a "biggie" in the "land of the free."
Actually, when we think about kingship, it grates against us.

But Jesus is not like other kings.
Jesus is not a worldly king; he is a spiritual king.

He doesn't boss us around.
He invites to follow him.
Jesus has his laws, and his laws are good for us,
and we can freely decide to obey them.
Sure, Jesus restricts our freedoms.
We are totally free to do good.
His restrictions prevent us from doing bad things,
and while restrictions might be un-American,
anything that restricts us from wrongdoing is a good restriction,
and it is for our welfare.

Jesus does not force us to serve him;
he is asking us to serve others.
Jesus does not demand that we submit to him;
he is offering us the opportunity to freely give our lives over to him.

If we will have Jesus as the King of our lives,
we will have true freedom and real happiness,
a freedom and happiness that no president, prime minister, or king can give;
a freedom and happiness no earthly kingdom or government can give.

The image of Jesus as King is not so bad after all.

King Jesus is benevolent,
and he wants nothing but the best for us.
When we give our complete allegiance to Jesus as our King,
it is then that we are truly free.