

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe | For Sunday, November 25th, 2018

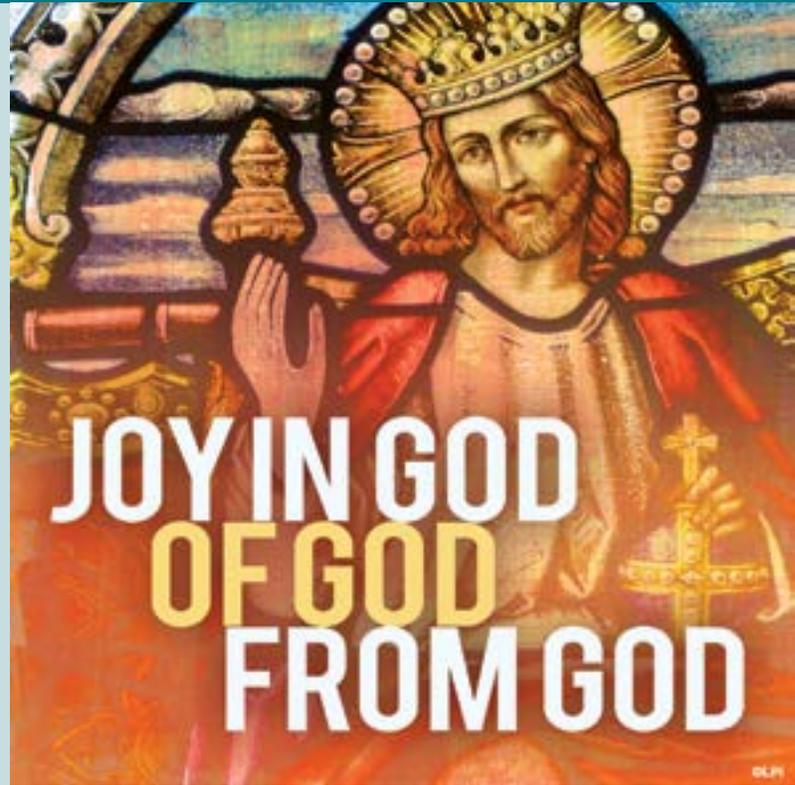
The King's Knight

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa,
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Daniel 7:13-14

Revelations 1:5-8

John 18:33b-37



Who doesn't love a good knight in shining armor tale? I sure do! I have always enjoyed stories from medieval Europe, with the squires, minstrels with lutes, the gallantry of knights, the elegance of kings and queens, the strategies of war.

I am reminded here of St. Francis of Assisi who lived during this era. While most of us are familiar with Francis in his love for the poor or his love of nature, many of us might not yet be familiar with his pervading vision of knighthood for Christ.

At 20 years old, he went off to war in Perugia, was captured, and held in captivity for over one year. It was due to his genial and chivalrous character that he succeeded in reviving the hopeless spirits of his fellow prisoners, in suppressing the unruly elements, and in composing the quarrels that arose. We can see that, even before his conversion, Francis had already possessed dispositions for that higher spiritual life according to the Gospel. While he eventually gave up the desire for position and recognition from his noble lineage, his chivalrous spirit took on a new spiritual character, and it was greatly enhanced and ennobled in the years to come.

We know that a knight cannot be conceived apart from his chivalric efforts dedicated to his lady-love. Francis' knightly honor drove him to fight valiantly with the spiritual sword of faith, truth, and virtue against sin, Satan, and the world. He loved with an inspired love, and his beloved was the bride of his Savior, the most noble Lady Poverty. As Christ was the sovereign Lord of the saint, thus poverty was the lady of his heart.

Even as I write this, I am confounded by the radicality of Francis. Even by today's standards, he might be considered too challenging for many Christians, not because of its complexity or extreme rigor but because of its gentle simplicity and unrelenting practice of Gospel values. This might be his greatest achievement of all: his return to the centrality of the Gospel and

imitation of Jesus in the Christian life. Hardly had he read or heard it that he was ready to put the lesson into practice immediately ... without over thinking it. We have a tendency to do that today: we call it "interpretation" or "rationalization."

Francis was not an exegete, theologian, philosopher, naturalist, or scientist. He was a man in love with Jesus, his king, through every fiber of his being and desired to be his follower down to the last iota. For as much activity he did, he spent more time in the solitude of prayer and meditation, particularly with the Scriptures. The prayer of his heart consumed his emotions, his God-tending will, his absorption in and union with God. Out of this, everything else flowed.

Francis was enamored by something that his contemporaries — and maybe some of us — had lost sight of: the radiant and intoxicating joy of being in the company of Jesus. He saw Jesus everywhere and through every situation. It was this joy that added a sweet charm to his knighthood. Spiritual joy was a compulsory element for his companions, not just in their heart but also in their exterior appearance and conduct as well. This joy was born not just of disposition or temperament but was fueled by prayer, poverty, and suffering.

Why so? Because Jesus prayed. Jesus was also poor and Jesus also suffered. For Francis, this was enough reason to insist that they were to be "harbingers of joy to the whole world." It is a joy in God, of God, and from God.

John Michael Talbot describes Francis' joy in this way: "Like a life-term prisoner who wakes up one morning to find he has been pardoned and is free to leave his dank, dingy cell, Francis made a sudden break with his past and the cares of this world when he embraced his new life of service to God and humanity."

What kind of a person must Francis have seen in Jesus ... the one we see standing before Pilate at the beginning of his trial in today's Gospel scene? A king ready for battle; a king worth defending with every ounce of energy until there's nothing left. How do you see him?

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PRAYER

Christ Jesus,
I acknowledge You as King of the universe.
All that has been created has been made for You.
Make full use of Your rights over me.
I renew the promises I made in Baptism,
when I renounced Satan and all his pomp and works,
and I promise to live a good Christian life
and to do all in my power
to procure the triumph of the rights of God
and Your Church.
Divine Heart of Jesus,
I offer you my efforts
in order to obtain that all hearts
may acknowledge your sacred royalty,
and that thus the Kingdom of Your peace
may be established throughout the universe.
Amen.