

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe | For Sunday, November 21, 2021

Recognizing the King

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa

Daniel 7:13-14

Revelations 1:5-8

John 18:33b-37

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When I hear the word 'king,' there's a couple familiar connotations come to my mind. First, I think Hollywood film, and second, British royalty. I think of Aragorn when he is crowned king after a series of epic adventures and battles in [Return of the King](#); I think the king-becoming of Peter in [The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe](#); I think King George III as depicted in the HBO mini-series, [John Adams](#); I also think of the curious reason why [Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh](#) wasn't entitled "king" even after he married [Queen Elizabeth II](#) five years before she was crowned.

Jesus' kingship is altogether different.

As we enter in [this Gospel scene](#), we find Pilate in a quandary in this interrogation. [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#) explains: "Having nothing at all of which to accuse him, and none of those crimes to allege against him that normally bring with them just punishment — and Pilate persisting in inquiring why they had brought him — they assert that Jesus had sinned against Caesar in assuming the dominion that Caesar had acquired over the Jews and in changing the glory of his kingdom to suit his personal aspirations." Pilate is unsatisfied with Jesus' answer, so in an effort to placate the escalating tension in the gathered crowd and to assuage the situation in the eyes of Roman hierarchs, Pilate has Jesus scourged (in the following chapter of the Gospel text). Little did he know that he was preparing Jesus for his royal presentation.

In my fascination with the royal throne, I enjoy watching royal coronation ceremonies with all the pomp and circumstance, the pageantry, the formality. I imagine there's plenty of assistance given to the royals to prepare them for such a momentous day. Jesus' preparations are much different. Jesus is soon dressed in his royal wardrobe, after having been brutally tortured, and then returned to Pilate and the gathered crowd. The paradoxical sight stuns them all, as it does us yet today. We are confused at the sight of the King in his royal wardrobe precisely because we tend to view Jesus' kingship with human eyes instead of through the lens of faith. We prefer to see kings in splendid majesty, and here is Jesus bloodied and bruised. We prefer to see the pageantry of the royal court, and here is Jesus standing alone. We prefer to see our kings with an enchanting presence over the crowd, and yet, we see Jesus whose presence seems to incite a riot.

And so, when we join our question to Pilate's — "then you are a king?" (18:37) — we betray our own blindness to Jesus' kingship. In the opening scenes of the musical [*Camelot*](#), we see King Arthur standing in a field dressed in the clothes of a common peasant. To look at him you would have no idea he was king. In fact, when Guinevere first met Arthur, she didn't have a clue that he was king over all England. Arthur was, in fact, king, but his outward appearance gave no evidence of this. Jesus' kingship is hidden in plain sight, he stood literally next to Pilate, who didn't recognize him.

Many of us are probably in the same situation as Pilate, unable to recognize the kingship of Jesus: maybe it's due to a lack of faith, maybe it's due to unrepentant sin patterns, maybe it's due to unforgiveness in relationships, or maybe it's something else. Ask yourself, "What would change if I really did recognize Jesus' kingship over my life? Might things be better off? Same? Or worse?"

- Br. John-Marmion Villa

PRAYER

To the king of ages,
incorruptible, invisible,
the only God,
honor and glory forever and ever.
Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17
New American Bible (Revised Edition)