

FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING 2014
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
COLOSSIANS 1.12 ST. JOHN 18.33

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The year is 1941. Father Martin Hellriegel is a Roman Catholic priest serving the large German-American community in Saint Louis MO.

Father Hellriegel has become more and more alarmed at the rise of fascism in his native Germany. And so he wrote the hymn we just sang...*To Jesus Christ our Sovereign King.*

The words to the hymn echo what Saint Paul says in today's Epistle..."He has reserved for us a place in the kingdom of Light; rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of his dear Son, who has set us free from our sins."

Just what kind of King is Jesus? He is not like any ordinary human king or elected government official. He has done for us what no government or political party could possibly do...he has done what God alone could do...made us his Saints and put us right with himself.

In the Old Testament, God is THE King who loves his people and sent judges to rule over them and encourage them to be faithful. In the First Book of Kings, the people came to Samuel and said God wasn't good enough...they demanded a human king just like everyone else.

God told Samuel to give the people what they wanted. He told Samuel, "They are not rejecting you; they are rejecting me." He also told Samuel to tell the people they won't like their human king. He will be dishonest and lie to them and sign treaties with foreign powers.

Samuel told God's people their human king will send their sons off to war to get killed; others will have to work in the king's fields. Their daughters will have to clean the king's house and make it smell nice. They will have their land confiscated and be made to work for nothing. They will be taxed unfairly and when they complain he will ignore them.

God's people got their human kings. Some were better than others. They took their jobs seriously and cared for the people. Others cared only about themselves and holding onto their power any way they could.

When Pope Pius XI instituted the Feast of Christ the King in 1925, he hoped it would inspire Christians everywhere "to give Jesus Christ lordship over every aspect of their lives." He wrote that he hoped "the Faithful would gain strength and courage from the celebration of the feast, as we are reminded that Christ must reign in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies."

That sounds a lot like the Collect for Purity said by the Priest at the beginning of every Mass...we ask God to cleanse every part of our being...beginning with our hearts. Left to our own devices, we cannot prepare ourselves properly for hearing and responding to his Word or receiving the Sacrament.

Let's again ask ourselves the question: What kind of King is Jesus? He is the good and gracious King we sing about in the Palm Sunday Processional. He is the Benign King of Father Hellriegel's hymn. *Benign* means...*kind...approachable...gentle...sympathetic...compassionate...caring...benevolent...not out to do us harm.*

We want King Jesus to rule over our lives because he always wants what is best for us. No human king or elected government official can meet that job description. Jesus is the King whose sovereignty over us today's Collect reminds us is gracious and for which we pray will ultimately bring all people of the world together in peace.

King Jesus loves us but he never forces his Kingship on anyone. But we don't want to miss out on what Jesus has to offer us...the place Saint Paul says God has reserved for us in the kingdom of Light...our place in heaven.

Saint Paul also tells us our true citizenship is in heaven. The Feast of Christ the King gives us the opportunity to thank God our Father for the gift of eternal life bought for us by his Son.

We can indeed gain strength from our Celebration of the Feast of Christ the King. We can start now to let Jesus reign in our hearts, minds, wills and bodies...the benevolent King that he is.

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