

The Solemnity of Christ the King, Year B
Dan 7:13-14
Ps 91 *passim*
Rev 1:5-8
Jn 18:33b-37

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With the holiday shopping season having kicked off on Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, here we are on the [Saturday/Sunday] between Black Friday and CyberMonday. It's called Black Friday, supposedly, because it marks the day when the retail world moves from the dreaded red ink of loss to the beautiful black ink of profitability. Black Friday, CyberMonday, when the culture screams, "Buy, BUY, BUY! Spend, SPEND, SPEND!"

In the midst of all that, the Church invites us to reflect on "What's it all about?"

This is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent, when we begin the new liturgical year. Today is commonly known as the feast of Christ the King. Officially it's called the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. "King of the Universe." [*gesturing to the crucifix*]. Some king, huh?

Have you ever taken a good look at our crucifix? I invite you to come up into the sanctuary sometime, maybe today after Mass, to come take a good close look at the figure of the suffering Jesus. I draw your attention particularly to the scroll at the top of the cross, where letters are carved in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. In each of the three languages, the words spell out "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." The words were dictated by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, Caesar's stand-in in that remote corner of the vast Roman Empire. It was the charge under which Jesus's execution was carried out.

In our Gospel reading today, from St. John, Governor Pilate interrogates Jesus. "King of the Jews, huh?" Earlier that evening, Jesus had a trial before the chief priests and the Sanhedrin. St. Matthew [26:62-64] reports that Jesus declined to speak until the high priest compelled him to testify, and then he applied to himself the image we've seen for the past two Sundays in the Book of Daniel, the image of "one like a Son of Man," who comes on the clouds of heaven. But Jesus did not choose silence while standing before Pilate. Pilate pressed him. "So you are a king?" Jesus's response to Pilate was, "My kingdom – and, yes, I have a kingdom – does not belong to this world. My kingdom is a kingdom of truth, a kingdom of justice, goodness, and beauty."

[*pointing to the crucifix*] What a sorry end for a king! But of course we know that that was not the end. Death had no power over Jesus. He rose again on Easter Sunday. But Easter Sunday was not the end. He ascended into heavenly glory on Ascension Thursday, with the promise that we who have been born again into Christ Jesus will share in his glory. But Ascension Thursday was not the end. He will come again, in the time of fulfillment.

He will gather up everyone who has listened to his word. All who have accepted him, in the Church, and proclaimed him Lord and Savior he will gather into eternal glory.

Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was a Jesuit priest. He died in 1955. Like almost all Jesuits, he was very smart and very well educated. He was also very holy. Father Teilhard was a trained and accredited scientist. Father Teilhard saw the world through the eyes of a scientist and a Catholic, Jesuit priest. He embraced the theory of evolution as explaining the process and course of the world's development. But evolution, for Father Teilhard, was neither blind nor without purpose. Evolution is how God created and continues to create the world. Father Teilhard saw in his own lifetime how human beings, endowed as we are by our Creator with the gifts of intelligence and free will, are ever increasingly gaining control over the course of evolution. And he extrapolated the future course of evolution. All of creation is heading toward fulfillment. The entire course of evolution is converging on what Father Teilhard called the Omega Point. And the Omega Point is Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

In 1934, Father Teilhard wrote the following prophetic words: "The day will come when, after conquering outer space and harnessing the winds, the tides, and the force of gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And, on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, humankind will have discovered fire."

The prophet Daniel foresaw how one like a Son of Man would come on the day of fulfillment, riding on the clouds like a charioteer controlling a team of warhorses, to usher in the age of final glory. Father Teilhard envisioned a future when human ingenuity and technological progress will ride the process of evolution toward ultimate achievement and ultimate convergence, in Christ.

Right after the 11h30 Mass on Sunday we will baptize Dominic Joseph Garcia, 4 months old. In his baptism he will put on Christ and embark on his new life in grace. After pouring the baptismal water on Dominic's head and reciting the words of baptism, I will anoint him with Sacred Chrism. The prayer of anointing concludes with this sentence: "As Christ was anointed priest, prophet, and king, so may you live always as a member of his body sharing everlasting life." Jesus Christ, the anointed one of God, is a priest, a channel of God's grace; the baptized share in his priesthood. Jesus the anointed one is a prophet, one who speaks with God's authority and carries God's word; in baptism we too are appointed prophets. Jesus the Christ is a king, one who protects the kingdom and extends its borders; by virtue of our baptism, we too share in his kingship. All things come together in Christ Jesus, the anointed priest, prophet, and king.