

This back-and-forth between Jesus and Pilate raises two questions:

- 1) Who is the King?**
- 2) And who are the King's subjects?**

**Pilate's terms in the debate are
governmental, political and jurisdictional.**

**Jesus' response is
personally relational, spiritual and - jurisdictional.**

**Pilate's jurisdictional motive is protection of the state and his position,
while Jesus' motive is jurisdiction over truth
and it's place in the hearts and lives of those who hear his voice.**

**The debate here is not so much the matter
of Christ's sovereignty over the Jews or the Romans
as it is the question of Christ's kingship over all peoples and all creation.
Or as Jesus puts it: he is King "of everyone who belongs to the truth."**

**And with those words he explodes the limiting categories
of politics, power, hierarchy and religion
assuming the crown by which he reigns universally over all.**

**The question for each of us, and for all of us as the Church is this:
have we made ourselves subject to the truth of Christ?
have we "listened to his voice" and lived according to his word?
Among the nations of the world, including our own, and within the Church itself,
we have, in many ways, lost respect for authority,
and lost confidence in what authority declares to be the truth.**

**How, then, do we come to know and acknowledge
and have confidence in the truth by which Jesus, our king,
commands us to shape and live our lives?**

**This question is made all the more complicated when so often
Catholic people pit their own understanding of the truth of Jesus
against the truth as it is interpreted and spoken by church authority.**

**I have no simple answer to this dilemma.
I don't even have a complicated answer to this dilemma: I live in the dilemma.**

**Christ gave us the church as teacher to help us discern the truth.
At the same time, the people of the church are Christ's body
and his Spirit of wisdom and counsel
moves among them and within them
freely and with grace - and truth.**

**Just as the teaching authority of the Church must learn to listen
for the truth in the people's discernment,
so must the people of the Church learn, again, to listen for the truth
in the Church's discerning teaching.**

Simply taking sides and refusing to listen,
rejecting out of hand what the other has to say,
is neither Christian nor faithful,
nor honest in a genuine search for what is true.

Perhaps the beginning place for all is the throne upon which Christ,
first established the depth of the truth of his word and love:
and that is the throne of the Cross.

All Christian truth flows from the suffering of Christ's kingly heart
and the grace of all truth is intended for those who listen to his voice:
especially the poor, the suffering, the marginalized.

The greatest test of truth is in the crucible of human suffering;
those who have the truth prefer it to their own power and prerogative
which they relinquish in service of their neighbor.

When Pope Pius XI established this feast of Christ the King in 1925 he said that
"church pronouncements usually reach only a few, the more learned among the faithful,
but church feasts and celebrations reach them all;
pronouncements speak but once, but feasts speak every year."

And so, today, the feast of Christ the King speaks once again...

This week witnesses the end of "the year of grace, 2006"
and next Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent, begins "the year of grace, 2007,"
a new year on the church calendar.

As we begin that new year,
pray with me that the feast we celebrate every Sunday,
the feast of the Lord's presence in the Eucharist,
will nourish in us a hunger for his truth
and the courage among all in the Church
to listen to the other in discerning the depths of that truth
which is Christ's kingship over us all.

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