

## Reflection for the Feast of Christ the King

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, this Solemnity marks the end of our Liturgical Year. Next week we enter a new Liturgical Year with the First Sunday of Advent. As we look to Thanksgiving, the Advent Season and Christmas, we can find ourselves planning for the holidays and looking forward to the true meaning of the Season. It is understandable that as we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, we would be looking beyond this celebration and focusing on Advent and Christmas. It was only in 1925 that Pope Pius XI established the Solemnity of Christ the King, Christmas has been celebrated on December 25<sup>th</sup> since at least 336 AD, and the Advent Season has been celebrated since 480 AD.

Noting the newness of the Solemnity that we celebrate this weekend, it is an opportunity for us to ponder the meaning of this Solemnity considering this Sunday's Gospel Reading. This Sunday in the Gospel of John is the account of Jesus being brought before Pontius Pilate and is questioned by him. Jesus had already been brought before the Sanhedrin and was convicted. The Sanhedrin was a legislative and judicial assembly with religious, civil and criminal jurisdiction in Palestine in the time of Jesus. Pontius Pilate was the 5<sup>th</sup> governor of the Roman province of Judaea from 26 AD to 36 AD, serving under the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Pontius Pilate was not from Palestine, he was most likely born in Italy, and some historians think he might have been born in Scotland. We do know that the Jewish Philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, writing in the year 50 AD chastised Pilate for his behavior regarding bribes, insults, robberies, wanton injuries, execution without trial, and supremely grievous cruelty. Today in our Gospel Reading we have the account in the Gospel of John of Pilate questioning Jesus, and at the end of this exchange we have Jesus saying, *"You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."* The "this" that Jesus speaks about is His pending death and resurrection. All the moments that we read about in sacred scriptures about the life of Jesus Christ lead to the "this" that Jesus shares with Pontius Pilate. I would venture to say that the 5<sup>th</sup> Governor of the Roman province of Judaea goes not understand what Jesus is saying to him. But even Pilate, who Philo found to have many character flaws still saw Jesus as an innocent man that should not be put to death and tried but failed, to save the life of Christ. It was the "this" that the Governor of Judaea saw in Jesus Christ, he did not understand, it but it caused him to react differently to Jesus.

So, on this Solemnity of Christ the King, what is the message we should take from our Gospel Reading that presents us with the conversation that Jesus Christ has with the Roman Governor of Judaea. Pilate, a man that is not from Palestine, how comes from another part of the world, from a different culture, a person not well respected by many in the Palestinian Community of his time. This man was able to see in Christ something that he did not see in others. Pilate found himself trying to avoid taking the life of Jesus Christ. He saw something in Jesus that caused him to pause and look for a different way to do things. It is clearly the "this" that Jesus spoke about when He spoke with Pilate. *"For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."* These two sentences are a part of last verse of our Gospel Reading this Sunday and they contain the reason that Christ came into the world, the "this." Which is the fact that Christ came into the world for the salvation of humanity. His death and resurrection provide each one of us with the hope and a chance of eternal salvation. You might at this point be thinking to yourself, Father we already know why Christ came into the world, this is not earth-shattering information. Yes, I agree with you for as people of faith we know that Christ came into the world for the salvation of humanity. But that was not the case with Pontius Pilate, he could not understand the "this" he could not understand the willingness of Christ, an innocent man, willing to give His life for others. It is sad to say but even today over two thousand years after Jesus dead and rose from the dead for our salvation, there are still people in the world that do not know the "this." This can lead us to the message of the Solemnity of Christ the King, which is for us to embrace the example of Jesus Christ, and the Saints who have gone before us in faith and share the message of salvation with a world that is in such need of it. It is the "this" that we need to share with our needy world, and it is the "this" that truly makes Jesus Christ the King of the Universe.