

Absolute Monarchy Avoids Anarchy!

Daniel 7⁹⁻¹⁰; Psalm 93; Revelation 1⁴⁻⁸; John 18³³⁻³⁷

My kingdom is not from this world. [John 18³⁶]

I have to confess that this is one of the Sundays in the Church year that I usually try to delegate the preaching to someone else: this is the first time in this parish that I have decided not to get someone else to preach.

I have therefore had to ask myself the question, 'why do I avoid this Feast?'

- ✦ It isn't because the Feast was invented by Pius XI in 1922. In his first encyclical (*Ubi arcano Dei consilio*), writing in the aftermath of WWI, Pius noted that whilst there had been a cessation of hostilities, there was no true peace. He was concerned about the rise of class divisions and nationalism, and held that true peace can only be found under the Kingship of Christ as "Prince of Peace". "For Jesus Christ reigns over the minds of individuals by His teachings, in their hearts by His love, in each one's life by the living according to His law and the imitating of His example." Christ's kingship was addressed again (in the encyclical *Quas primas* published in 1925): Jesus's kingship was given to him by the Father, and was not obtained by violence: "'Christ,' he says, 'has dominion over all creatures, a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped, but his by essence and by nature.'"
- ✦ Nor is it because, in the UK at least, the concept of absolute monarchy is outdated and therefore not understood. There are places where it is more readily understood: in the Kingdom of Brunei a royal proclamation from the Sultan has outlawed the celebration of Christmas against a fine of \$20,000 and/or 5 years in prison. Such absolute power generally engenders fear, but it was Pope Benedict XVI who said that Christ's kingship is not based on "human power" but on loving and serving others.
- ✦ It certainly isn't because the readings aren't inspirational:
 - ❖ The image in Daniel is a window into the dignity of God's presence. The purpose of the assembly was for judgement **and the books were opened**. Then Daniel sees the reincarnate Jesus (not the Hebrew people as some commentators suggest because it is addressed

individually) to whom is given universal kingship.

- ❖ The Psalm reminded me of my home town. I have as my screensaver the picture of a wave. The lighthouse at the end of the breakwater is about 100 feet and this wave towers over it. But the image doesn't capture just how wet the stay is, nor the noise of water smashing into concrete, nor the sense of powerlessness a mere human feels against this. The Psalmist obviously understands this when he says, **mightier than the thunder of many waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea, the Lord on high is mightier**.
- ❖ John's introduction to the Revelation is a theological summary of the work of Jesus - the one who through his death and resurrection showed that he **loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood** and challenges us to know our place to become **a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father**. Revelation will go on to explore the relationship in heaven between God the Father and God the Son (read Revelation 4 & 5 together to get a sense of this), preparing for the full revelation of Jesus in majesty to those who will welcome it and reject it alike.
- ❖ In the Gospel we encounter the meeting of earthly and heavenly majesty - the Roman Governor meets the one whose **kingdom is not from this world** and in the attempt to eradicate Jesus lives on, named in every Creed. Suffice it to say that the Empire ran its course and the Kingdom of God remains and grows.

Why would I want to avoid preaching on this?

Perhaps, because it is so simple: a king commands subjects who do what they are told. Perhaps it is because it is so difficult to inspire the worship that this King demands. Perhaps it is because the Church keeps its eyes fixed on earthly indulgence rather than heavenly living.

From the Gospel there was one line that captured my attention: Jesus says to Pilate, **did others tell you about me?** A fascinating thought that the Sanhedrin were evangelists, telling others about Jesus. If Christians don't tell other about Jesus by an obvious submission to his Kingship, who will?