



Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers
From the clergy and members
of Holy Trinity Church
Forbes Park, Makati

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Comment: Insert Comment here
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Readings for this Sunday:

First Reading Jeremiah 23:1-6
Second Reading Colossians 1:11-20
Gospel Luke 23:35-43

When it comes to the celebration of today’s theme, Christ the King, the British have a definite advantage. They are one of the few nations with the semblance of a functional monarchy to which they are still emotionally attached. Americans sometimes talk about the “imperial presidency” of “Dubya”, but that is meant facetiously, and usually without affection. Indeed, British observers have made the point that for Americans, the thing that comes closest to the Queen is the flag. However, as the late great actor Peter Ustinov once commented, “in the U.S., when a flag falls to the ground etiquette dictates that it must be burnt. In England, if the Queen falls to the ground, someone will pick her up!”

But although Brits might have an easier time imagining monarchy, their experience might not help when thinking about Christ as King. The Queen is, after all, a grandmotherly woman with a big hat. Jesus’ kingship as it is described in Scripture is considerably more awesome and even frightening. And the readings and hymns of this day talk about a considerably more absolute monarchy than anything modern people outside of Brunei or the Gulf States could recognize.

Today’s theme is important, though, for the very reason that it is uncompromising. Jesus is too often portrayed as a kind of cosmic “buddy”, a friend who can be counted on to be there when we need Him, but certainly not to make demands of us. Those of my generation have lived through the attempts to make Jesus an abstract concept, a singing clown, a singing superstar and a very

ordinary historical rabbi. While all of these “faces” of Jesus have some validity, they must be connected to the uncomfortable, uncompromising and un-buddy-like statement that “Jesus is Lord” if any of them are going to resemble the Jesus proclaimed by the Christian Church.

Jesus is Lord. That is a powerful statement, and it should come as no surprise that there has been a lot of controversy surrounding it. Feminists claim that ‘lord’ is both too gender-specific and patriarchal-power oriented. But their attempts to substitute ‘sovereign’ fall into the same trap.

Others point out, cynically but accurately, that the huge spectrum of Christian denominations and belief systems in the world today doesn’t allow a simple acceptance of the statement “Jesus is Lord” without getting bogged down in debates over, “Who is Jesus?” “What does ‘lord’ imply?” and “What does ‘is’ mean?” You see the problem.

But I am not going to be analytical with you today. This is a time to express our allegiance. [Following last week’s patriotic extravaganza] it is high time to recall just who is the boss of the Church, and why. Most members of a congregation if asked the question, “Who is in charge of the Church?” would reply, “The rector.” Others, cued in that this might be a trick question, think of Anglican polity and respond, “The bishop.” But the truest answer is and must be Jesus Christ. It says so in our catechism. It says so in the words of our services. And if it doesn’t say so in the way we do business both as a church and as individual Christian men and women, then shame on us!

It is important to remember that the word ‘lord’ as used by the writers of the New Testament had nothing to do with feudal society, but with divinity. The ancient Greek gods were referred to as ‘kyioi’ or ‘lords’, as Paul reminds us. To speak about Jesus as Lord was a whole lot more than saying that he’s the boss. It is saying that he has the authority and the power of God. Greek churches often show Christ in this aspect on the inside of the domes of their churches. Robed as a teacher, holding the Gospels in one hand and blessing the world with the other, this picture is called ‘Christ the Pantokrator’ the All-Powerful. It is a far cry from most people’s idea of Jesus as a “nice guy”, but it is Scriptural; as it says in John’s prologue: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

[Now today has also been designated as “Stewardship Sunday”, and you have just heard our Treasurer, Bertie Ezra, speak well about the fiscal, financial needs of our church. Normally, it also

falls to me to say something specifically “spiritual” about giving in support of our programs for 2005. However, I am going to run the risk of Bertie’s displeasure by doing nothing of kind. Does that mean that I think that it is unimportant to give towards the work of Holy Trinity? Not at all. But all I will say, again, is that Jesus Christ is the head of this church. Everything that we do here must be according to his agenda. Every program and event must have his approval and blessing. Even as mundane a thing as finances will be conducted as a spiritual exercise of our stewardship of what God has given us. That is the best and the most responsible way to run a congregation. And if there are enough people out there who agree, and want their parish to continue to proclaim Jesus as Lord, then healthy stewardship will be one of the responses. I would say that Holy Trinity still has important work to do. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have considered staying on. And I hope you agree and will share in that work in whatever capacity God, your conscience and your finances allows.]

Today’s second lesson from Paul’s letter to the Colossians, is the hymn of praise to the head of our church: “...He is the beginning, he was first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, when he made peace by his death on the cross.”

Jesus is our head. Jesus is our King. You are in his embassy right now and he invites you to join in the work of bringing the whole world into his kingdom. JESUS IS LORD!