ChristusRex(2022)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**:

This feast day of Christ the King is not in our PB. But it is the name that our first six original churches took for their diocese after the break with the Episcopal church in the late '70s later becoming the Province of Christ the King after adding more churches.

Christ the King is a solemnity celebrated elsewhere in the Western Church mostly on the final Sunday of the year. As we ought to know, that Sunday is not around New Year's Eve but the Sunday before Advent begins. (Affection ally known as "Stirrup Sunday" in the English Church due to use of the word "stirrup" in the collect hearkening to kick-off for Christmas baking season.)

Celebrating Christ's Kingship in the Western Church began fairly recently, post World War One. In December, 1925 it was placed on the last Sunday in October by Pope Pius XI to be just before the Church commemorates all her Saints. It was viewed by many as a reminder to Mussolini, *Il Duce*, as to whom really is "Leader" not just of Italy but the world.

This was mere months after our 1928 Prayer Book would have passed its first of two mandatory, **as-is**, General Convention ratifications. So, Anglo-Catholics didn't want to upset the apple cart since the 1928 was far more to their liking than the 1892 PB.

*"To this end was I born".*

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Our Gospel passage today recounts Jesus' private conversation with Pontius Pilate. This means it almost certainly was revealed by Jesus after his Resurrection. As we all know, Pilate was not happy with what was going on that day and desired to let Jesus go. What went wrong so to speak? In short, Pilate's past caught up with him.

Pilate had been Procurator or governor for about five years. Lesser provinces such as Judea had a procurator from Rome keeping matters under control. Large provinces such as Syria had a Proconsul. Yet, Judea had not been that way for very long. Indeed it had been almost unique.

When Herod the Great died just a few years after Jesus' birth there had been no representative from Rome in charge. Herod ran the show as king and tried not to offend Rome, not infrequently slaughtering people. (He was their sorta king.)

But upon his death Herod's kingdom was **divided** between his three sons: Antipas over Galilee and another region; Phillip over several regions, and Archelaus over Samaria and Judea where Jerusalem was. While Antipas and Phillip ran things ruthlessly as "dad" had done, Archeleus ruled with SUCH tyranny that the people after only two years implored Rome to remove him and send them a governor. Archelaus' tyranny is why Joseph and Mary settled in Nazareth of Galilee upon returning from Egypt, as we hear in the Gospel for the Second Sunday after Christmas.

Pilate obviously must have enjoyed a reputation as a good administrator or he would not have been given the challenge of running a critical land which was between two large provinces, Egypt and Syria. Yet, Pilate was a failure as a governor.

Before Jesus crucifixion, Pilate had made three blunders which had enraged the locals. First, he had kept the image of Caesar on his troops standards (decorative symbolic staffs) which they carried coming into and leaving the city from their headquarters nearby in Caesarea. Out of deference to the Jews concern about not worshiping other gods, the previous governors had removed Augustus' image since the Emperor had begun to be worshiped as a god.

Pilate kept Augustus' image on the standards. When Pilate rounded up the leaders in an amphitheatre and told them to stop complaining or he would slay them then and there, the leaders volunteered to die. Pilate's bluff having been called, he left and lost face.

Another time Pilate raided the Temple's ordinary funds, those monies were those not designated specifically for sacrifices, in order to help build a popular and very much needed new aqueduct. When mobs formed over Pilate's treasury raid he sent men undercover into the mob and got people killed.

A third incident similar to the first had happened not too long before Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. When visiting Jerusalem Pilate was taken to staying in the imperial palace. Yet, he had his soldiers carry beautiful little shields which also bore the image of Caesar. The people at this point had been so irritated that they complained directly to Rome. The emperor Augustus, who--unlike later emperors-- actually was uncomfortable with being called a god, and had ordered Pilate to remove the images.

With this as background Jesus then rode into Jerusalem to a hero's tumult. The Jewish leaders wanted to eliminate him for various reasons, not least of which was concern for their own positions now that "the boss", the messiah, had shown up.

We hear the leaders in one of our Holy Week lessons effectively telling Pilate that "if you let Jesus go, you are no friend of Caesar's". Today we might call such a threat... blackmail. The weakened governor of mighty Rome, Pilate, in effect let the simple but regal Jesus be killed... in order to keep his own job.

Yet Jesus tells Pilate that it was for this **very** end that he was born. He was born to die. Our Epistle for today bears rereading because it is a beautiful, short, summary of Christian theology. It concludes echoing Jesus' statement to Pilate: "having made peace through the blood of his cross... to reconcile all things unto himself."

The tragedy of Pilate is one each of us needs to ponder since it plays out in our own lives. Pilate could have and very much wanted to spare Jesus. He saw the injustice that was being done. But saving Jesus would mean probably losing what he had, all he had worked for.

This is where the "rubber hits the road". Concerns about this life, as important as they can be, can turn us away from doing what we know is the best path. Are our past decisions and actions holding us back, keeping us from doing the right thing? Would we love nothing better than to do what we hear in the voice of truth, but we just can't do it. Are we then hearing, but not listening to the voice of truth?

This is why many saints are remembered on our calendar and not Pilate. While brutal as the times, Pilate may have been a decent and sympathetic guy. Yet, he put his own life ahead of our Lord's, unlike the Apostles and all the Church's other saints. They, whether martyred or not, died for the Lord just following what the voice of truth told them was correct. As we prayed at the outset: "May **we** His faithful people be granted pardon and peace, cleansed from **all** our sins, and serve Him with a quiet mind." Amen.

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