

Solemnity of Christ the King Year C

This summer while on my pilgrimage to Santiago, after saying my prayers, I would often listen to an audio book to help pass the time on the long sections of the trail. One of the audio books I listened to was the Lord of the Rings. One of the most inspiring characters in the Lord of the Rings for me is Théoden, king of the Rohan. He starts off as a man possessed by the wicked Wormtongue, who through his lies, was able to keep the king inactive to answering the threat of Saruman and the orcs. Even the death of his son was not able to shake him from his inactivity. But that is not the end of the story because Gandalf goes and shakes him out of his slumber and frees him from the grasp of evil. Théoden then becomes a king who puts his heart back into his people by his love and sacrifice. Every time I heard of his noble and kingly actions, his love and self sacrifice in the cause of righteousness, it made me weep for joy at encountering such courage. The final battle is so inspiring to me. Théoden calls his kingdom to ride forth to lift the siege at Minas Tirith, partly in response to an allegiance to the kingdom of Gondor, but you almost feel it is more his duty as a man to fight against what is evil and to stop making bargains with it. One of his captains says to him, "My Lord, we do not have enough men to raise the siege. We should wait." But King Théoden replies, "We ride anyways. There is not time to wait." They did ride and in the darkest moments of the siege of Minas Tirith, in the early dawn when the men under siege had lost all hope, the Riders of Rohan appeared over the hill. King Théoden, at the head of his men, rode down into the sea of the enemy to help lift the siege. He is killed in the battle but dies like a king of his people. He died a great king because he inspired his men to greatness, inspired them to lay down their lives versus lay down to what is evil.

As great as Tolkien's description of Théoden is, and as how moving a description of the love and sacrifice that he was willing to do for his people is, he is but a pale example of the great King we celebrate today. Our King, in full possession of power, offered his life for all of his mostly ungrateful servants, most who do not even believe they need saving and in a true sense are often in the habit of making their damnation a reality. Out of this hatred rises that King who dies for the people who do not love Him. In this He shows the real power over hatred and the cause of hatred, which is sin and its woundedness. Who could fathom some one dying to save his enemies of his own free will, and that is our King my friends. Though we continuously whip, scourge, crown, strip, mock and finally crucify Him, Our King laid down His life so we have the opportunity to be part of His eternal Kingdom. If you feel that you and I are not part of this, I ask you, have you sinned? If you are not the Blessed Mary, you have to say yes and sin will take us out of the Kingdom. Not only have we sinned, we have caused others to sin, as others have caused us to sin and someone had to pay the price for that so we need this King. Secondly, because no one in Heaven is interested in our money, could you save up enough to pay for all eternity? The answer is no. This is our King, dying for people who didn't even care to be saved, yet if He didn't save them they would spend eternity in torment. What a sacrifice, what a love. Our King overcame death and made death come out of life. Now sins can be forgiven, and not only can sins be forgiven, but the damage caused by sins can be healed so then we don't have to sit in a cycle of sin.

The world is once again full of hate by people who think they are not hating and it is God's love alone that can overcome it all. Our King does not desire to see one of us condemned. His call is,

“Friend come up higher.” People ask why God doesn’t stop evil. Because He can transform evil and make good come from it, if we invite Him in.

There are many people who hate the Church because of sins of people in the Church, but God can heal them so that they don’t have to live in that hell all their days. It is terrible to be abused for certain, I can think of few things that are as awful. The only thing I see as more painful than the original abuse is to remain unhealed afterwards. It seems that the pain of abuse is made worse by remaining in it, thinking about it, regretting the situation, hating your abuser. When God, as a King, can heal it. Many victims of crimes turn into abusers because they are not healed. People who choose healing heal others and make the world a more wholesome place. I am certain that the crusades that are going on in our country against life, sexuality, freedom of speech, racism are all led by wounded people who desperately need healing. Our King is the fulfillment of all desire and any seeking of the fulfillment of our desires outside of God’s plan leads to wounding.

Our King does not hate us because we sin. He hates sin because it hurts us. His call is always, “Friend move up higher. Do not satisfy yourself in death but in my Kingdom.” To the soul who is seeking freedom in abortion, our King says *Friend seek it in me so you do have to experience such pain and evil.* To the one who has participated in abortion, our King says *Child let me heal you so that you can know what real love is.* To the one who seeks satisfaction in sexual sin, be it pornography, masturbation, homosexuality, acts of fornication, adultery or other acts outside of God’s plan, our King says *Friend move up higher. What you are seeking will not be satisfied. I was wounded so that in my wounds you can be healed and really get what you are seeking.* Our King can heal and forgive because He endured and paid the cost for our sins and is looking to heal them and us. If we are always an angry person who is miserable in life, our King says *Friend bring your wounds to me, move up higher, take the real place created for you.* If you think that God has harmed you, you are welcome to take this up with Him and He will show you what you need. Our King is great and His greatness is that He loves in the midst of hate, if we do not harden our hearts He will heal the wounds and the desires that sin has caused. How does this healing occur? There is no magic formula, it is healing by accompaniment. We start by going to Confession and then for the wounds we ask God to reveal them and ask that each time we come to Communion to heal them. If we have hate in our lives towards people, we ask the Lord to heal them. We are not to come to Communion with hate in our hearts. There is a strange ritual in the Church, which I believe is most misunderstood part of the Mass. It is the Sign of Peace. Many times it seems like recess in the Church and people go around and greet each other. It is not, it is a final examination of conscience before we receive our King. The question to ask is, “Do I hate anyone, Lord?” If the answer is yes, then pray, “Lord have mercy and heal my hatred,” and then we symbolically give peace to those closest to us as a sign that is peace born out of love in our community. Before we partake of the ultimate feast of love, we must love, too, by the grace of God. Our King is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and He is saying to all of us, *“Friend move up higher. Know my healing. Know the true fulfillment of all desires.”*