



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Christ the King-Year C-November 24th 2019

Readings: 2 Samuel 5:1-3, Psalm 121, Colossians 1:12-20,

Luke 23: 35-43

The last time I met a king Sara and I were standing outside the remarkable modernist architectural triumph of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. I hadn't realised I was in the way but a very courteous policeman asked me to shuffle over a few feet as a dark limousine pulled up. There was no crowd, no fuss and very little security as Felipe VI of Spain, tall, handsome and in an ordinary lounge suit, climbed out. The most noticeable thing about him was his wife, a pretty girl who was so thin that any temptation to dwell on her beauty was swept away by a concern that she might have an eating disorder. The whole thing was very low key and, truth to tell, we had no idea who they were until the moment had passed. He smiled, waved at the couple of dozen of us momentarily in his presence and moved on.

Prior to that, some years earlier, I had been at a reception in St. James' palace and met Prince Charles – a perfectly affable neo-elderly man in a lounge suit and the slightly strangulated vowels of the English upper classes.

Other than that I see his Mama on telly often where, apart from the State opening of Parliament where she has clearly raided the dressing up box,

she looks much like everybody else's granny except for her immaculate but dated fashion sense.

The point is that, in none of these presences, is there a real sense of majesty and presence. They are decent people doing the job that history has bequeathed them and modern democracy has tolerated for fear of something worse. They are figureheads of national unity but politically impotent. The bow or curtsy before them is no longer a recognition of the power of life and death of sovereign sway. It is a constitutional courtesy acknowledging the peaceful and agreed settlement of our times.

When we come then to this great feast, the end and climax of our liturgical year, we need to take a step back and remind ourselves how inadequate our picture of sovereignty is and how incomprehensible such an attribution would be to a non-believer.

We proclaim that Jesus Christ is King of the Universe. This is, or should be astonishing to us every time we say it and shocking to anyone we tell. What we say, however, is inevitable from our experience of the divine. As Christians we acknowledge the whole created order was brought into being by the divine 'fiat' – the Word of God.

That Word, we claim, was content to be enfleshed, incarnated, in a poor Jewish boy, born to a virgin and holy mother in a borrowed shed and fleeing the sword points, grew up in exile, returned in obscurity and whose brief moment in the sun made him a footnote of secular history. That Word, we claim, was the divine presence among men. That Word took on human form, human suffering and human mortality and triumphed. That triumph made possible the salvation of Man. That victory ensured the apotheosis of Man, the divinisation and eternity of the fragile death doomed corpus of our fallen, now redeemed, humanity. We are dealing, or rather being dealt with, by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords – the Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniscient sovereign of all worlds and beyond, of all time and eternity – the origin and end of all

things – the purpose and purpose of our very existence.

We are not dealing with a nice man in a lounge suit or someone's lovely granny in fancy dress. We are in the Presence of the glory of unapproachable light.

We are not paying our respects to a constitutional settlement that keeps the peace but rather kneeling before the Prince of Peace Himself – the One who has brought reconciliation between the King and his rebel subjects, pardoning our sin and restoring us to the society of the Paradise.

When we celebrate the glorious Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, that is the wonderful mystery to which we bear witness.

That is the Kingdom to which, for all our inadequacies, and by His grace alone, we belong.

That is the Kingdom to which we invite all others to belong – not as citizens of a passing republic but as Subjects of the All Powerful and All Merciful God.

Our worship, our liturgy, our buildings, our lives, our witness needs to speak of that inestimable truth. We both, and at once, walk the road of this earthly pilgrimage beside the Man from the Galilee and simultaneously we accompany the Divine and Incarnate King whose identity was revealed at Mount Tabor and in the miracle of the Third Day.

To correct my opening statement then.....the last time I met a king was not in Bilbao. It was here at the altar of His Sacrifice where we kneel together, his inadequate but loyal subjects, before His hidden and sovereign glory in the mystery of the Mass.