

Reflection for Solemnity of Christ the King

Daniel 7:13-14 Revelation 1:5-8 John 18:33-37

“Will you marry me?”

As a Catholic priest, who has taken a vow of celibacy, I don't actually get a chance to ever ask anyone that question – not unless I want to get into big trouble with my bishop and my Religious Superior!

But I do have the privilege of hearing brides and grooms tell me how their life changes when someone gets down on one knee, and asks, “Will you marry me?”

That's one of those questions that literally changes your life.

People have told me about other questions that changed their lives.

Like when someone asked, “Would you like to come work with us?” That changed a life.

Or that day when my Irish parish priest said to me, “Patrick, have you ever thought about being a missionary priest?” That question changed my life.

Or the woman I know who is now in her 80's. Early in her marriage, her husband was unfaithful. And in the terrible aftermath of that infidelity, he asked her, “Would you be willing to at least try to save our marriage?” And through the grace of God and the strength of the marriage vow, she said ‘yes – I am willing to try.’ And now, surrounded by her husband of 50 years, her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, she realizes how that question changed her life... for the better.

As we read John's Gospel today, Jesus is on trial. The Jewish authorities have already called for his crucifixion. Now Jesus stands before Pilate, the Roman Governor. In Roman trials, the usual legal practice was that the governor asked the questions, and the prisoner answered.

So at first, everything seems to go according to the legal standard. Jesus stands before Pilate, and Pilate asks him the question – “Are you the king of the Jews?”

And according to Roman legal practice, Jesus should simply have answered Pilate. But instead, Jesus puts PILATE on trial, by asking HIM a question! Jesus asks, “Are you saying this on your own, or have others told you about me?”

If Pilate had really paid attention to Jesus's question, it could have changed his life.

Why do I say that? Because Jesus' question contains a fundamental truth. And the truth is this – Pilate's life, your life, my life, will not really be changed if our only experience of Jesus comes from what OTHER PEOPLE TELL US ABOUT HIM.

Pilate's life, your life, my life, will be TOTALLY transformed if WE HAVE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF JESUS' LOVE AND LORDSHIP, HIS REIGN, IN OUR LIVES.

If Pilate had listened to the Good news and personally allowed Jesus' truth to take root in him, he would have realized that Jesus is, indeed, a king unlike any other.

The kingship of Christ is not about earthly power, His kingdom is a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of love and peace.

Are you ready to let Jesus' questions change your life?

2000 years of Christian experience demonstrates that Jesus will ask us lots of questions, every one of which can change your life, if you listen.

For instance, Jesus may say to you

+ it's good that you know that you are a sinner. But are you ready to confess your sin and do something to stop it?

+ it's good that you are a member of a church. Still, are you simply an observer of the faith, or a believer and doer?

+ I am not sure that Christ will ask me: How often did you receive Holy Communion? I suspect He will ask me, How did your sharing in the Bread of Life make you more Christ-like?

+ I don't think Christ will ask me: How often did you hear a sermon or preach a sermon about forgiveness. He will ask me, How often did you actually forgive?

+ I don't think Jesus will ask - How many promises did you make. He will ask me, How did you KEEP the promises you made?

+ Christ won't ask me - How much earthly wealth did you amass. He will ask - How did you give away what the Living God gave you?

+ How often did you pray for justice in the world? How did you actually work to make the world just?

+ He will ask, How did you put your spouse first, your children first, PEOPLE first?

We are not on trial today. But we are worshipping Jesus Christ, the king of kings, the Lord of Lords. The Beginning and the End.

That saviour loves you so much that He is asking you a life changing question today – Do YOU, want Jesus to really, truly, lead you, guide you, teach you, change you? Do you?

He's asked the question. Please say, "I do."

We need to give Jesus control over our lives. Today's Feast of Christ the King reminds us of the great truth that Christ must be in charge of our lives, that we must give Jesus sovereign power over our bodies, our thoughts, our heart, and our will.

Christ the King has given us servant-leadership as the model. For we are called to be a people who reach out to embrace the enemy and the stranger, a people called to glory in diversity, a people called to offer endless forgiveness, a people called to reach out in compassion to the poor, the sick, the outcast, and the marginalized in society and render humble and loving service to Jesus in each of them and a people called to support one another in prayer.

We accept Jesus as our King of love when we love others as Jesus loves each of us, unconditionally, sacrificially, and with *agape* love.

Fr Patrick