

Homily for Sunday Mass, November 25, 2018
Christ the King – John 18:33-37
----Father Mike Cadotte----

In our second reading we read of the Alpha and Omega (beginning and end of the Greek alphabet letters but also a common reference to God who was in the beginning and will be in the end). "...the one who is, and who was and who is to come, the almighty." (REV 1:8) Today is also an Omega of sorts as it is the last day of the liturgical calendar – an end leading into a beginning. Next Sunday we begin anew with the start of Advent – the preparation of the mind and soul for the celebration of the birth of Light into our world and into our lives; and this idea of a birth of light will be the focus of our Advent journey. But for today, we still have a little unfinished business to wrap up before we begin anew with the greatest birth story ever told.

I must admit that listening to Christ's interaction with Pilot, in today's Gospel reading, use to frustrate me. He could easily have escaped the pending torture and death by saying what Pilot needs to hear. Pilot was not out to kill Jesus, but he was out to prevent unrest. His mentor was already killed for failed leadership and so if he to appease the local religious authorities if left no other option. Another aspect that frustrated me is Jesus' refusal to give what seems to be a straight answer. He is not only avoiding helping himself, but He further is most likely angering the man that will determine His fate.

The happy-sad fact is that by telling truth-to-power as Jesus did, he was killed, and as a result of that, we were saved. Jesus knew this, and we so gratefully benefit from it. It is in this exchange, however, that we are reminded one last time that Jesus was introducing the world to a new concept of leadership (kingship) through love – the love of God. Our acceptance of this love, meaning our living life according to the teachings of love, peace, and acceptance of all peoples, is to enter into His kingdom. A kingdom not of this earth but a kingdom of God. This sacrifice of Jesus is, as Konrad Schaefer put it, that Christ the King, "...is the proprietor of the empty tomb and the organ donor of the transplant of the new heart for our humanity...that restores the dignity of the human race."

Unlike rulers and despots then, and today, Jesus gave us a special way to live life, a way of peace, love, justice and service to each other. Despotic leaders use fear, hate, anger, and ignorance to build their support base, but one thing we do know is that support base never lasts past their time of power and vanishes to history once such evil persons no longer control others in fear. Jesus was not such a leader but gave us the way of light, to model our lives and our interactions with others and we are still sharing those ways and stories to this very day! Now that is a leader! That IS a King of Kings!

Here is the caution in our reflection at the end of John's Gospel, we clearly know the rest of the story of the cross: death, life, and ascension as well as the story of the birth of Jesus we are about to start reflecting upon this Advent. There, is however, a whole wealth of living that happened between those two points - those alpha and omega moments. Jesus was born, grew, took a trade, is believed to have achieved success in life before he began his ministry. His life was of one direction that drastically turned to another. Jesus never settled on a rigid view of His life, He looked to God for direction, He had free will as a human but always did what was right – even up to his death. He loved others, traveled dusty roads with people of poor, lowly and often despised status. Very different from how His life began, and so very authentically Him.

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Many of our lives are vastly different today than how we saw them unfold in our minds earlier in life. Or, maybe you are now facing such change and feel uneasy. Look to Jesus and remember how he lived, what he did not only in word but in deed. All through this liturgical year we have studied the Gospels and scripture for guidance and have walked with Jesus. We journeyed with Him, learned from Him, loved Him, and have modeled our lives after Him. We did this for we know He is our Lord, our divine leader, teacher, and guide – He our the King of Kings. Our lives often mirror that of Jesus, I suspect, filled with the same works that Jesus did only in less grand ways. All of life is about growth. And that growth comes most often when our character and skills and education are challenged by adverse and even evil energies. It gives me comfort to lean on Jesus' teachings to help grow through those moments and not only survive but thrive.

So, as we now begin a new year in the church, may we once again look to God's out pouring of love upon us and may we again connect with our Shepherd, our magnificent, caring King to inspire us and model for us how we are to live!

AMEN