

*Jesus, King of the Jews is Not of This World*

A gospel reflection from Brian Wigger, Pastoral Associate

What is truth? ... Truth and power are on trial these days. Each seem to get more corrupted by the minute. Kings and presidents, religious and secular leaders, have their truth and power scrutinized and tested, judged and betrayed, condemned even. Fake news and cover-ups are swirling around us like uncontrollable tempests and hurricanes, messing with our head. Nothing seems certain anymore, nothing seems truly true, even on the religious front. Nothing seems spared this dizzying unravelling of securities, of stability, and of clarity.

In the midst of this confusing ethical, cultural and moral tsunami comes this weekend's Gospel account of Jesus before Pilate. Two kings, two rulers, in a showdown of power and truth. Jesus' truth and power was completely other. And deep down Pilate sensed it. Pilate so sensed how completely different Jesus' power and truth were, that his nerves trembled. Even Pilate's arrogance couldn't hide his inner shaking. *"Are you the King of the Jews?" "My kingdom is not of this world ..."*

In the wake of fake news, in the wake of never-ending revelations of failures and sins by leaders in all spheres of life – politicians, teachers, principals, religious leaders, business giants – we celebrate this weekend, Feast of Christ the King. We, foolish followers of a King, dare to claim that in this King lies salvation, in this King lies the way to fullness of life even in death. What a ludicrous claim in the face of today's world!

How do we respond as followers of Christ, this new King? Our response truly sounds ludicrous. Our response is a king hung on a cross. A king on a cross ... not a popular answer right now. Yet that's our answer, the only answer ... A king – himself a victim of the atrocities we inflict on one another, no matter whether committed in secret behind closed doors in family homes and workplaces or on a world stage in government offices and churches.

Pilate agonized, pacing back and forth as he questioned Jesus. He agonized, because here before him was a man who puzzled, scared and intrigued Pilate. Pilate is aware on a subconscious level that his power and authority is really just an illusion. That illusion gets challenged by this weird prisoner. And that makes Pilate very nervous. And so he should be. Because the power and authority of Christ the King, what makes Christ King is indeed a power "not of this world" meaning, completely counter-intuitive for us humans.

What makes it so? Because unlike the increased show of force called for by world powers today, and the cacophony of voices claiming truth, for the very first time in human history, and so far the only time in human history, someone DARED to refuse to project and pass on the violence and pain inflicted on him. Someone, with a power not of this world said: the buck stops here. In this determined non-violent response, Jesus released a power far greater than the kind we humans normally employ.

That's what gives Jesus the crown of glory.