“Stay with us, Lord”
2021 Year of the Holy Eucharist, Diocese of Jackson

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING (Year B)
November 21, 2021

I. “Pilate said to Jesus, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’” (John 18:33b)
   A. The Greek text here is not a question, but is emphatic and sarcastic: Σὺ ἐί ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. It means something to the effect of: “You (of all people!) are the King of the Jews.”
      1. Pilate is subtly mocking Jesus and denying the possibility that He could be a real king. Pilate is judging Jesus by His appearance, His birthplace, and His companions.
      2. Jesus’ response (“Do you say this on your own…” v.34) is meant to point out Pilate is judging blindly.
   B. Pilate’s response (“I am not a Jew, am I?” v.35) is meant to be taken not only rhetorically, but as if Pilate is disgusted and assumes most people would be disgusted at the idea of being Jewish/Hebrew.
   C. The subtext of this entire conversation is that Jesus does not present Himself or seem like He should be a real king, though Pilate appears in all the glory of the Roman Empire. The irony is that the real share of power is switched.
      1. Pilate later begs to be removed as governor of Judah and never really succeeds as a Roman nobleman.
      2. Christ veiled His true glory while in His earthly life.

II. As we begin the Year of the Holy Eucharist in our Diocese, a connection can be made between the ‘hiddenness’ of Christ’s kingship and the ‘hiddenness’ of His Presence in the Holy Eucharist.
   A. To the secular world, the Eucharist may sound just as fantastical as Pilate perceived the Kingship of Christ. You can think of so many Christian reformers through history who, by their doctrine, sort of say: “This (of all things!) is really Jesus Christ.”
   B. Most priests, by now, are familiar with the Pew research survey which states that only 31% of Catholics accept and believe in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament.
      1. A perhaps more alarming statistic is that of the 69% of Catholics who do not believe in the Eucharist, 43% of those believe that the teaching of the Church is that the bread and wine are symbols, and 5% were unsure what the Church teaches at all.
      2. So, we have an issue not only of non-belief, but of non-catechesis.
   C. Catholics need to know that it is the Church’s fundamental belief that the Holy Eucharist is the substantial Presence of Jesus Christ, Risen and Ascended.
      1. Our worship of the Holy Eucharist is the worship of the ‘Son of Man’ seen in Daniel’s vision (cf. First Reading: Daniel 7:13-14).
   D. Flannery O’Connor recalls a conversation with fellow-author, Mary McCarthy: “When she was a child and received the Host, she thought of it as the Holy Ghost, He being the ‘most portable’ person of the Trinity; now she thought of it as a symbol and implied that it was a pretty good one. I then said, in a very shaky voice, ‘Well, if it’s a symbol, to hell with it.’”

Prepared by Fr. Aaron Williams