

Kevin Nadolski. OSFS

November 25, 2007: Christ the King

Our Lady Queen of Peace (RCIA's Rite of Welcome and Acceptance)

I have recently become a fan of history, though I am no history buff. I wonder if my new-found interest has grown out of getting older myself. Perspective is always aided by knowing our past, whether it is family, national, world, or church history.

Today's Feast of Christ the King grows out of an important historical moment: Pope Pius XI was addressing the spread of communism and socialism that challenged social justice of the early part of the last century. It was his hope that an international recognition of Christ as our ruler would bring God's peace and justice to our world. We still need his peace and justice, and we still need this feast.

I think there is a sharp contrast between the royal overtones of the feast and the royal understatement of the Scriptures. Most kings and queens reign from thrones with a lavish court around them. Jesus hails from a cross between two thieves. Kings and queens are dressed to the nines and bejeweled beyond measure. Jesus is naked and crowned with pain. The mark of their leadership is great armies and palaces. The mark of Jesus' leadership is his vulnerability. Yes, there is something very different about this King we call Christ. There is something very different about this Kingdom we call God's. One chief difference is the sign of the cross.

The sign of the cross is our primary mark of identity. We are born into Christ by the words: I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The sign of the cross is our passport that declares our citizenship in God's Kingdom and guarantees our citizenship in heaven. The sign of the cross is our life-line, and it is our blood line, too.

Today, though, as citizens of God's kingdom, we are called to spread and shed this blood. Not literally, but thoroughly and spiritually. Just the way Pope Pius XI desired justice and peace to spread throughout the world, quelling the evils of violence, oppression, poverty, and tyranny.

Church, as citizens of God's kingdom, can't we take the cross into our lives at home and work and school and give away the forgiveness that Jesus gave on the cross? Can't we offer the benefit of the doubt instead of rigid judgments that causes others pain and imprison them to the boxes we stick them in? Can't we make choices that include the marginalized of our society and Church and world the way Jesus always reached out to the outsiders of his day? Do we make the sign of the cross real when we vote, ensuring that like Christ's arms were open on the cross our nation's arms are open as we draft immigration policies that are just; after all, our primary citizenship is in the Kingdom of Christ? When we do these things, we are obedient to the sign of the cross.

In a few moments, we will trace the sign of the cross over the bodies of our catechumens and candidates, those women and men who are entering our Church. This is an ancient

ritual, but perhaps many of us are seeing it for the first time. As our new friends are signed with the cross let us resolve with them to be people of the cross and people of the Kingdom. As we take this sign into the world, people will know the Lord's prayer has been answered, for thy Kingdom will have come. And, we will have made history!