

### **November 22, 2015 Christ the King Homily:**

My brothers and sisters, in the days of my youth, I was captivated by the charms of an American actress, Grace Kelly, who, you may recall, became a member of Royalty as the wife of Prince Rainier of Monaco. I learned all about her fairytale romance, her storybook wedding in the royal chapel and her life as a public figure. She was beautiful, an Irish Catholic and a noted philanthropist as a princess. I put her on a pedestal.

Years later, I read a biography of the late princess. All her personal failings were exposed in the book. After many years, she fell off the pedestal I had created for her. Ought I have been surprised? She was a flawed human being, not unlike virtually all those who have sat on the royal throne.

Today is the feast of Christ, "The King of the Universe". Bear in mind that many of the kings of Israel failed to distinguish themselves while in office. Even the celebrated King Solomon's crown was tarnished because of his dalliances with foreign women, among other things. So-called Catholic kings and queens were seldom elevated to sainthood.

In today's gospel reading, Pilate a man of considerable power and influence meets Jesus. In each of the four gospels, Pilate asks Our Lord a pointed question: Are you the king of the Jews? The Evangelist makes clear that Christ is unlike the rulers of the earth. His kingdom is not inspired by the powerful figures of this world. The man standing before Pilate is a prisoner. He has no army to defend him, no financial backing and no political power. He is humiliated, a man of sorrows. His mission is spiritual and his kingdom is not of this world. His unforgettable words to his tormenter bear repeating. "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (Jn.18:37).

As one of the foremost scholars of the Gospel of John, Fr. Raymond Brown has written, "Only those who belong to the truth can understand in what sense Jesus has a kingdom and is a king". In the 1920's the church in Mexico came under severe persecution. The anti-catholic leadership of the country made life very difficult for Catholics who practiced their faith. One of the faithful, who suffered martyrdom, was the Jesuit priest, Fr. Miguel Pro. On the day he was shot by a firing squad, Fr. Pro was asked if he had a final request. "Indeed, I do", replied the priest. "I wish to pray". His humble request was granted. Fr. Pro knelt in front of the bullet riddled wall and prayed for two minutes. After his prayer, he stood with arm outstretched in the form of a cross, and, in a firm voice, cried out: "Viva Christo Rey!" (Long live Christ the King!). Only seconds later, he was shot to death.

In the past couple of weeks, Christians in France and Mali have been the victims of terrorist attacks. In the wake of these unspeakable tragedies, let us recall the words of Jesus: "my kingdom does not belong to this world" and "my kingdom is not here" (Jn.18:36). Let the words of our Savior be a consolation to all who mourn and grieve for their loved ones who lost their lives in the massacre. May we, too, be reminded that Christ's kingdom awaits us as it awaited Father Pro on the day of his execution.

Amen!