



The Canticle

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Voice of
The Community
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KING OF KINGS

It seems that this season of the year we frequently encounter references to the King or Sovereign motif. Pentecost season ended with the celebration of Christ the King, followed by the First Sunday of Advent with its focus on the second coming of Christ (the King) at the end of time. *The King shall come when morning dawns and light and beauty brings: Hail, Christ the Lord! Thy people pray, come quickly, King of kings.* (The Hymnal 73)

Then at Christmas we joyfully sing about the newborn King. *Hark! The herald angels sing glory to the newborn King!* (The Hymnal 87)

Finally, we celebrate Epiphany, which begins with the arrival in Bethlehem of the Magi from the East bearing gifts.

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him; the King of kings salvation brings. Let loving hearts enthrone him. (The Hymnal 115)

It is very Franciscan to use the metaphor of Christ the King. Francis called himself the Herald of the Great King—the Christ who is the “firstborn of all creation, in whom were created all things in heaven and on earth” (Col.1:14), and who is also the Word Made Flesh in the birth, life, and death of Jesus.



When we consider Jesus’ life in terms of the concept of Christ the King, three events of his life come to mind. First the little babe born in a stable and placed in a manger, a cow’s feeding trough, in Bethlehem, he whom the Magi called the King of the Jews—The little Lord Jesus, “whose coming was revealed to the nations not among men of power but on a woman’s lap” (Janet Morley).

Our Advent and Christmas hymnody is full of King language:

Joy to the world! The Lord is come; let earth receive her king. (The Hymnal 100)

The second time in Jesus’ life that the king imagery is front and center is the triumphal entry into Jerusalem when Jesus is hailed as the long-awaited Messiah, the anointed one, the successor to King David who will free the nation from Roman rule and re-establish the Kingdom of Israel. However, Jesus arrived

on a donkey, the Hebrew Scripture metaphor for the King of Peace, to the cries of “Hosannah to the Son of David!”

And finally, at the end of his life, at the trial before Pilate, we hear Jesus speaking of his kingdom being not of this world in response to Pilate’s question about his status as a king. Then at the crucifixion that followed,

Pilate had that cynical sign placed on Jesus' cross: "This is the King of the Jews." And the people mock Jesus, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself." And the request of the good thief, "Remember me when you come into your Kingdom." There at the crucifixion we see Jesus reigning as King, crowned with thorns and enthroned on the cross.

Clearly Christ as King is not like an earthly monarch who generally strives for his or her own power and glory. Born in a stable – entering Jerusalem as a humble peacemaker riding on a donkey -- murdered on a cross. What kind of king is that?



Certainly Jesus, as a Jew, would have believed that God sits on his heavenly throne and governs all things. However, I don't see Jesus as focusing on the title of king for himself or even for God. Jesus calls himself the Son, and God he calls Father. It is about relationship, kinship, rather than kingship. In Jesus' parables he tries to teach the people about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is like.... Are the opening words to so many of his stories. And what do these stories tell us about that Kingdom? They don't speak much about rules and regulations, or power and glory, but rather about righteousness, peace, reconciliation, joy, mercy and forgiveness. This is the good news about God's Kingdom of Love that Jesus brings to the world. The Bishop of California, The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, has suggested a better translation for "kingdom" would be Beloved Community.

Allegiance to temporal authorities has gotten us humans into trouble over and over again. We are divided, we fight and even kill each other over these

allegiances. It is important in this time of divisiveness in our country and in our world, that we can point to the allegiance to Christ the King as our ultimate allegiance. Above being an American, an Episcopalian, or any other group identifier. If Jesus is Lord, then nothing, and no one, else can be.

San Bernadino of Siena, a Franciscan saint from the 15th century lived in an Italy made up of small contentious city-states which were torn by rival factions, each with its own party emblem. Looking for a way to invite them to move beyond these factions, Bernadino preached on the Holy Name of Jesus, the name before which "every knee must bend and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: Jesus Christ is Lord." (Phil. 2:10-11). Bernadino had banners made with the emblem YHS on them, the abbreviation of the Greek word for Jesus. Bernadine organized processions behind these banners to symbolize the surpassing of old allegiances.

As Christians we believe that God's love for the world has already been revealed, that the salvation has been completed in Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. We believe that God's Kingdom is already here among us. And yet we are still in a state of waiting; we are waiting for Christ's return, for the completion of the world, for all suffering and injustice to end. And we believe that the mystery of God's love for us is present with us now, every moment. Meanwhile we live somewhere between the here and now, the already, and the not-quite-yet.

Music has the power to say it all so meaningfully, so this reflection will end with something which hopefully will make you hear the orchestra and chorus in your head in this quote from Revelation as set to music by George Frederick Handel in his profound oratorio "Messiah." *The Kingdom of this world, has become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and of his Christ. And he shall reign for ever and ever. King of kings and Lord of lords. For ever and ever. Alleluia, alleluia.*

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule.
(BCP Collect for Christ the King).

Creator of the Stars of Night

Sr. Pamela Clare, CSF

King of kings seems too small and narrow a title, or concept, for the person of Jesus Christ, as does the title sovereign for God.

I am a big fan of the “Cosmos” TV series—both the original with Carl Sagan in 1980 and the one with Neil deGrasse Tyson from 2014. Most recently, I have been thrilled by the Nova series “Universe Revealed.” The science is cool and the graphics are fabulous.

Actually, I have been fascinated with the story of the evolution of the universe since childhood. I stumbled into this area of study accidentally as a result of looking up an article on volcanoes in an encyclopedia when I was in fifth grade. In my childhood, there were no children’s books on the subject so I had to read the books in the adult section. Luckily I lived on a US Air Force base and had access to a more comprehensive library than that available from my school, which was in Arkansas during the time when it was illegal to teach evolution. Apparently that prohibition related not only to life on earth, but to the life of the cosmos as well.

God, Sovereign of heaven and earth, is really quite a parochial concept given the place of our earth and our bit of “heaven” in the Milky Way Galaxy, let alone in the Universe.

And the universe!!

Looking back....

Our sun, dating back 4.6 billion years, situated in an obscure location on an outer spiral arm of the galaxy,

400 billion stars in our Milky Way Galaxy, dating back 10.5 billion years.

2 trillion galaxies with 1 million billion stars in our Universe, dating back 13.6 billion years.

13.8 billion years ago the universe came into existence with the Big Bang as all matter for all time was created then and there.

And possibly, our universe is but one in an unimaginably massive ocean of universes called the Multiverse.

Looking forward...

4.5 billion years from now, the beginning of a collision between the Milky Way and the Andromeda Galaxy.

5 billion years from now, our sun will become a Red Giant helium-burning star and swallow up the inner planets, including the earth.

10 trillion years from now, the Age of Stars will come to an end with the death of the last star.

The contemplation of the vastness of space, the power of gravity, the amazing diversity of matter, the incredible depth of time, and the mind boggling future trajectory of the universe leads me to a powerful sense of the awesome nature of God, the creator of all that is and ever will be.

God is bigger, older, and just plain “more” than any of this amazing creation of which I can see only an infinitesimal bit when I look up into the night sky. How can I not feel gob-smacking awe?

And yet, my Christian faith in the Incarnation tells me that as small and seemingly insignificant as earth and humanity are in the grand scale of the universe, God has “stooped to ask of me the love of my poor heart.”

My God, how wonderful thou art, thy majesty how bright, how beautiful thy mercy seat, in depths of burning light!

O how I fear thee, living God, with deepest, tenderest fears, and worship thee with trembling hope, and penitential tears!

Yet I may love thee too, O Lord, almighty as thou art, for thou hast stooped to ask of me the love of my poor heart. (The Hymnal 643)

Let every heart prepare him room!



The Canticle

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The Canticle
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King of kings



OPPORTUNITY FOR 2022

We are currently planning on our Ten-Day Intensive Residential Program **Companions in Franciscan Spirituality** to take place in 2022. The status of the pandemic at any given time during the next year may force us to change our plans. However, if you are interested in sharing our life and studying Franciscan Spirituality during Holy Week, Mid-Summer or Francistide, please contact us. The first offering is planned for Holy Week, April 8-18, 2022.



Srs. Jean and Maggie with Companions in Franciscan Spirituality 2018.

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