

Christ the King

The concept of Christ the King is based largely upon a European historical view of leadership. Where the culture of the people is found in the expressions of their belief systems.

Thus leadership and dignity are visualised with the appearance of a strong and just King.

However as much as our natural inclination is to present the faith in our own image, the core truths of the Gospel regularly subverts, and questions, the comfortable notions we project upon the person of Christ.

Christ the King is most clearly expressed in the crucifixion. The dignity of the Son of God is most obviously articulated in the powerless acceptance of the will of the Father.

Christ the King rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and walked out carrying a cross.

Where then is real dignity to be found in the lived experience of the people of faith

Where is the power of the gospel message to be perceived?

When I in Kenya as a part of the work, I would stay with the local communities, in the area of the parish. Each evening would be concluded with food. This was in part because of our need for nourishment, and in part, because when the fire was no longer in use, so there was no light and everyone went to bed. On one occasion, as we sat chatting around the fire the local lunatic came and joined us. This was a poor destitute man who was quite mad, and spent his harmless days wandering from place to place.

The mother of the house found a place for him, calmed him, and when the food was ready fed him, then off into the night he went.

I then had a real image of the dignity and power of the Christian King.

In one of the parishes I have worked in I had the honour of getting to know a man who while servicing in the second war, was captured by the Japanese and imprisoned in one of the notorious slave camps. No doubt this experience had an effect upon his nature.

However much as one might presume that such cruelty would make a man bitter, when I came to know this hero this was not the case.

His wife was in the last stages of Alzheimer's and he cared for her as best he could. The gentleness, patience and common sense this man demonstrated, in the struggle, was truly beautiful. Not sure of his own faith he remained true to the practice that the woman had shown all her life.

I the priest, was called in to serve a man and woman whose actions so reflected the intense dignity of the love of Christ my King.

Then of course there was Basil. He was a patient in Prestwich mental hospital who I met as a student doing pastoral experience work. Basil had killed someone years earlier, when the psychosis he suffered had driven him to act in that irrational manner. Many years and many sets of drug treatments had passed and Basil although no longer dangerous was still confined mostly to the lock up ward where I was working.

Occasionally I was sent out of the ward to accompany Basil to the shop to use his spending money. Returning one day a lady patient stopped us at the security gates.

She was very ill, and asked for the attention we gave her. Then she asked Basil for some of his tobacco. He very simply handed over a large lump of the ready rubbed he had just purchased. When through the gates I question his generosity.

He replied with real authority

“It is the only pleasure she has”

I thus was given a vision of the dignity of Christ our King.

The Middle Ages

The glamour of Tudor Court

The celebrity of the Royal families of Europe

It is not here that we find the Image of Christ the King

Look instead to examples of sacrifice, service and kindness.

There is the pomp

There is the glory

There is the true dignity

Of Christ our Eternal King