

Social Justice Homily Notes: (Yr.C) Christ the King

November 25, 2007

Introduction

Power is the ability to do work; an engine's power is measured by how well it drives a machine; a government is considered powerful if it can implement its policies; a business is recognized as powerful when it gets people to buy its products or services; yet, power must remain connected to its source; a machine which is cut off from its fuel supply stops working; a government which loses favor with its supporters gets defeated; a business which does not satisfy its customers sees them go elsewhere; clearly, power can only be used effectively when it recognizes its origin

Scripture Texts

In today's Gospel, some Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers and a thief mock Jesus for not having the power to save himself; by doing so, they separate earthly authority from its heavenly source

The story of David's kingship stressed the Jewish belief in the link between earthly and heavenly power; after the death of Saul's son Ishbaal, the leaders of Israel came to David and requested he become their king; in their proposal, they make it clear it was God who revealed David would be "shepherd of my people Israel"; as shepherd, David is called to guard and care for the flock (the Jewish nation) rather than glorify himself; by calling him "ruler over Israel", they leave room for the kingship of God suggesting limits on his power; making a covenant with David and anointing him reinforces the role God plays overseeing the process; later when David does what displeases God by committing with adultery with Bathsheba and killing Uriah the Hittite, David's authority begins to fade as shown by the rebellion led by his son Absalom

Luke's account of Christ's crucifixion reveals how false understandings of power can lead to the separation of earthly and heavenly authority; the Jewish leaders scoff at the fact Jesus could save others but not himself; for them power is only useful when its effects are demonstrated publicly; the Roman soldiers mock Jesus by saying this king of the Jews can't even save himself; for them power is about forcing your will upon others; the thief derides Jesus for not saving himself and his fellow prisoners; for him power is only useful for promoting self-interest; yet, Christ's power is meant to fulfill his Father's plan not create a public spectacle; it works by invitation rather than coercion; it can only succeed by sacrificing self to save others; while the Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers and thief are gone, the saving power of Christ is still around 2,000 years later

Application

As the Church teaches, all legitimate authority comes from God (Catechism #1899) and must be used for the common good (Catechism #1903); it must recognize, respect and promote human and moral values which are founded not on changeable majority opinions but objective moral law (Compendium of the Social Doctrine #397)

As citizens we can shape how power is used within our society; we can call on our federal and provincial governments to use their resources to reduce the effects of poverty; such a strategy would include setting specific targets and timelines such as those implemented by the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland; like the thief on the cross, many people feel abandoned and wretched; the dignity and solidarity offered by the Kingdom of God may be their only hope; we must strive to make that hope a reality through concrete action; this activity includes becoming more informed about issues of poverty, voting in elections, writing letters or signing petitions to our political leaders; collectively these actions can make a difference

Politics is a moral enterprise; as people of faith, we are called to work towards making God's kingdom a reality in our world; this means recognizing that power is intended to serve the common good; we hear many voices which talk about power in different ways; they want it to be used for promoting self-interest, eliminating opponents and maximizing wealth; we must make it clear that all earthly power comes from God and is designed to serve the interests of all.