

The Prophet Daniel starts us off today with a short canticle that is considered to be the most significant prayer of the Hebrew faith. The complete focus of the prayer is on our God as the Supreme Being, the King of Kings, The Emperor of the Universe, Lord of the physical and spiritual dimensions. Everything, everyone, living and dead comes from him and will eventually return to him. Our protector who led his people Israel from the land of Egypt to the Promised Land and who leads us from the depths of sin to everlasting life in heaven.

In our society we don't have much experience with kings. We look with some amusement and befuddlement on the United Kingdom with the energy they expend watching and commenting on the Queen and her Royal Family. We look at medieval history with the many walking and talking disasters that were called kings and get a lesson in how absolute power in human hands corrupts absolutely.

But Jesus Christ isn't just a human; he is also the Son of God. He always had and always will have absolute power. He is our King, our High Priest, our Prophet; that is, our teacher. He is the only one capable of offering an acceptable sacrifice to the Father in reparation for our sins.

Earthly Kings demand obedience and loyalty. Christ the King demands not only the obedience and loyalty in our actions; he also looks for obedience in our thoughts and in our words, a total commitment to God of strength, heart, mind and soul.

But doesn't this concept of obedience fly in the face of our free will? If this is what God wants from us, why didn't he just hard wire it into our brain? If he did then all of the world's problems would just go away. But so would our ability to love, and to freely make our commitment to God.

Back in the First Grade Sister Bernadette taught me the purpose of life. Even though she didn't state it that way, and I never memorized it to her satisfaction, this is the gist of what I learned. "God put us here because he loves us. He wants us to serve him and to love him and to eventually return to spend eternity with him in heaven." The divine love of God addresses our human freedom as an invitation to love and obey him. When we are unable or unwilling to respond in the affirmative, the love of God continues the conversation. The obedience demanded by God is our gift of love to him.

The practice of our faith is a life long spiritual journey, but it is also very human. When we teach the faith to others, when we work to grow in our own faith we must approach it from our human experience. We have no choice because we are human, tied to this physical plane and unable, except in extremely rare instances of Divine Grace, to experience even the smallest measure of the spiritual plane.

As an example of our human need, God is perfectly capable of coming to be a one with us, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity without any sign, symbol or even the priesthood. But if he did, would we be capable of believing that he had come? How would we ever know? How would we separate the experience from delusion?

The fact of the matter is that being physical beings, we need something physical to focus our thoughts and actions. The human agency of the Ordained Man to act in the Person of Christ as Priests gives us that necessary interaction. We watch and listen to the words in the Canon of the mass that indicate the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Moving to receive the Eucharist during the Communion rite is not just getting into the line to support efficient logistics, it represents the movement of our souls toward God as we have those final few moments to prepare to receive him into our souls. The reception of the Eucharist lets us know without a doubt that God is within us.

In the same way we can garner a better understanding of Jesus Christ as the King of Kings through our human experience. Back in medieval times when one was subject to an earthly king, an oath of fealty was required. This oath was a pledge of faithfulness from the vassal to the Lord and from the Lord to the vassal. In the pledge the responsibilities of both parties were delineated. The vassal would kneel before their Lord, and place their folded hands between their Lord's hands. (Does this posture sound familiar?) Generally the vassal swore to be loyal, faithful, tend the land, protect the property, pay their taxes, and serve as a Soldier in defense of the Lord when called.

The Lord pledged in return for the faithfulness of his vassal to provide justice and protection to the vassal. The whole procedure was recognition of both the assistance owed by the vassal to his lord and the protection owed by the lord to the vassal.

This is all very interesting, but one has to ask; when did we ever make an Oath of Fealty to Jesus Christ, the King of Kings? I will argue that our initial Oath was at our Baptism. If we were infants our parents made the Oath for us and we renew that exact same Oath at every Baptism we witness, and every Sunday during Easter.

Do you remember the words? We respond with I do to each question. Let me refresh your memory, the oath goes like this:

Do you reject Satan? And all his works? And all his empty promises?

Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died, and was buried, rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting?

This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it, in Christ Jesus our Lord. And all respond; "Amen"

This is our faith, this is our fealty, and this should be our primary focus, the way we live our lives. After all, we have taken the oath. Arguably we renew this oath every time we recite the Apostle's Creed or Nicene Creed. Point in fact, as the Eucharist is presented and just before we receive him at Mass we acknowledge that we are receiving the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, we confirm that we are free from serious sin and that we believe and hold to be true all that the Catholic Church believes and holds to be true, all in that simple response of "Amen". In other words, we renew our Oath.

What is our Lord's promise to us? After all, an Oath of Fealty is a two-way exchange. He gives us an Angel to protect us throughout our lives; he gives us all we will ever have, all we will ever accomplish, all we ever will be. He provides the earth and the universe that we have to live in, the children that warm our hearts and even the food on our table. In Baptism he makes us members of his family; he shares with us his three-fold office as Priest, Prophet and King. All gifts freely given from our Lord and King.

And yet Our Lord and King gives us still more! He forgives us when we break our oath through sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, he becomes one with us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, he comforts us in our affliction in the Sacrament of the Healing of the Sick, lavishes the gifts of the Holy Spirit on us in Confirmation, blesses and strengthens our primary human relationship in the Sacrament of Marriage and provides human agents to act in his person to minister to us in the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

He established the Church to bring us closer to him and to help us understand how our relationship with him can best be nurtured and strengthened to help us to live in accordance with our oath.

We can't forget that Jesus Christ, our King of Kings is also our most faithful servant. He poured out his life for us on The Cross. Not because we deserve it, not because the sacrifice is owed to us, not because it is possible for us to earn it. The King of Kings, the person who holds all creation in existence through an act of his will suffered the most cruel, humiliating, painful death that man in our cruelty has ever devised... solely because he loves us.

He died because we break our oath, the part where we reject Satan, all his works and all his empty promises. In other words we sin. We lose the bubble and forget the meaning of life. We are faithless servants, always falling into sin. But God is never faithless. He always honors his promises; he never sets aside his love for us.

That is why he is not only the King of Kings; he is also the Servant of Servants, the one who's love and service to us makes all things possible.