



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

CHRIST THE KING -November 25th 2018

Bodmin/Tintagel

Readings: Daniel 7: 13-14, Psalm 92, Apocalypse 1: 5-8, John 18: 33-37

Who would have thought, even a few years ago, that the obscure but vital subject of sovereignty would be at the centre of our national debate over such a long period. Only a couple of weeks ago we were privy to the thoughts of Prince Charles on the future of the monarchy. As His Royal Highness prepares increasingly to take on his role as head of state – after his mother’s remarkable reign and the longest apprenticeship in royal history – we heard his response to some difficult questions. Would he still be able to give his views on controversial issues when he became king? No, he understood that the constitutional monarchy would not allow him that liberty – he would, in his own words, ‘not be that stupid’. As his interventions in national life have been, for the most part restricted to criticising the hideous brutalist architecture that has disfigured our cities and encouraging people to conserve the planet, this seems to be a pity. Nonetheless it is a measure of how far monarchy – the rule of the One – has retreated over the centuries from absolute power to a constitutional rubber stamp. The truth is that most of us, monarchists or not, prefer the common loyalty to an impotent head of state to the alternative of President Blair,

President Major, President Corbyn or President May. Sovereignty then is no longer lodged with the sovereign but rather with the people, the Demos, from which we get democracy – and that at second hand through our Parliament.

Prince Charles' problems are as nothing beside the raging debate over sovereignty which has divided parties for most of my adult lifetime and climaxed in the referendum and the current parliamentary civil war and national divisions. The question nonetheless remains valid. Who governs? To whom do we voluntarily cede authority? Behind the endless negotiations on Irish borders, immigration, currencies, trade, judicial authority etc etc is the fundamental question. Who governs? This may all seem a long way from where we are today in Church. It is not. Here we are at the Feast of Christ the King, in many ways the climax of the Christian Year, the apogee, the endgame of the history of salvation, the time when all time will come to an end and be swallowed up in the final judgement and victory of Christ's kingdom.

For a Christian the question of governance is central to his life and witness. He or she is called to have a loyalty to the appointed powers of the State where they are legitimate. But our ultimate and transcending loyalty is to the Kingdom of God. This is no constitutional monarchy hedged about with constraints and restraints, with restrictions and caveats. This is an absolute monarchy – the rule of The One. We see and understand everything else in the light of that supreme and abiding sovereignty. As

democrats, nurtured in a society that has enjoyed freedom from tyranny, we can be cautious about absolutism of any kind. After all we have examples of twisted theocracies extant in places like Persia and Pakistan. But in Christian understanding we are part of a kingdom whose king has lived, loved, suffered and died in our humanity. He is no

stranger to our lot. More than that He is the representative of God to Man and Man to God. He is the very outpouring of the divine love and mercy to Man and the high road to salvation for the lost.

His sovereignty knows no limit. His authority over the creation, that He has brought into being, knows no bounds. His governance is benevolence – for the ultimate good of Man. His judgement is righteousness and truth. We need not fear this Absolute Monarch for, in His beloved Son, we have learnt to call Him Father. In the triumph of Christ over sin and death we have our destiny restored. We are the ambassadors of that glorious kingdom. Whether Charles is a wise king or not will matter a little. Whether we are under Brussels or Westminster will matter more. Neither will matter remotely as much as whether this land and the hearts of our people are loyal subjects of Christ the King and servants of the Gospel of His love.

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