

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Cycle B

Deuteronomy 7:13-14

Psalms 93 1, 1-2, 5

Revelation 1:5-8

John 18:33B-37

Rev. Charles B. Gordon, C.S.C.

The Garaventa Center

The University of Portland

Years ago, my mother had the opportunity to meet the new bishop of her diocese. Afterward she told me, "I really liked him. He didn't seem like a bishop at all." At the time, this struck me as funny. It made me wonder if bishops were like fish, which is only good if it doesn't taste like fish. But, of course, what she really meant was that the new bishop was approachable. Rather than sheltering behind the dignity of his high office, he was warm and relatable. He knew that he didn't have to stand on his dignity in order to have dignity. We value this quality in all sorts of important people. We admire warm and approachable presidents, princes, professors and professional athletes. We are delighted when the great prove to be humble.

Our taste for humility in august personages has its origins in the feast we celebrate today. Its official name is "The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe." Titles don't come much grander than "King of the Universe," yet it's little more than a footnote on Christ's resume. If the universe had never existed, he would still be the eternally begotten Son of the Living God. As it is, our readings today reveal him as the "ruler of the kings of the earth" whose reign will endure forever. He is the Alpha and the Omega...the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

And yet, as the second chapter of the Letter to the Philippians reminds us, he chose to empty himself, being born into human estate, taking the form of a servant. He chose to be born in a manger, and to make himself vulnerable to us – vulnerable to our love, but also to the suffering resulting from our sinfulness – accepting even death – death on a cross. And after his Resurrection he continues to take our human nature, as part of himself, for all eternity. It's no wonder that the followers of such a Savior value humility in the great.

The question, of course, is whether we will take Christ as our model and embrace humility in our own lives. Do *we* dare to be humble? It will take courage. The temptation, in a threatening world, is to take the opposite course. Our instinct is to struggle to build ourselves up. Our ambition is to make ourselves invulnerable to rejection, derision and suffering of every kind. The tragic consequence is that we make ourselves invulnerable to love. The *irony* is that we can perfectly well afford to be humble. You see, by virtue of our baptism, we have a lofty title of our own. We are adopted sons and daughters of God. When God sees us, God sees Christ. We need *never* be afraid. We can afford to accept Christ's invitation to empty ourselves of ourselves, and become what God made us to be: reservoirs and conduits of the love that creates and sustains the universe. Come on. We've got this.