

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe – B  
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Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
25 November 2018

Daniel 7:13-14  
Psalm 93  
Revelation 5:1-8  
(Mark 11:9, 10) John 18:33b-37

*What Would You Fight For?*

If you've watched any University of Notre Dame football games on television in recent years – in addition to some good football (like this season) and some not-so-good football (like some other seasons) – then you might also have seen a special two-minute segment that is shown during every home game. Connecting with the university's mascot – the *Fighting* Irish – the segment is called “What Would You Fight For?”<sup>1</sup> Over the past twelve seasons, this series has informed viewers about more than eighty different ways in which university faculty, students, and alumni are using their education, research, and careers to *fight* for good in this world.

Some of these segments have highlighted the *fight* for such good causes as: Fighting for Peace; Fighting for Human Dignity; Fighting for Justice; Fighting for the Environment; Fighting Disease; Fighting to End Poverty. The point of the series is more than just to promote the university. The point of the series is to inspire all of us to *fight* for good, wherever we are. At the end of each segment, the narrator asks all of us an important question: “What would *you* fight for?”

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Perhaps, on today's Solemnity of Christ the King, we can hear Jesus ask each of us that very same question: *What would you fight for? What's important to you? How are you fighting to advance the Kingdom of Heaven in this world?*

And on this Solemnity, we do acknowledge Jesus Christ as our King – but as a very different kind of King than we're used to in this world. After thirty-three years in this world;

after three years of public ministry in which He performed many great signs and wonders<sup>2</sup>; Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as a triumphant King – the One who they thought would redeem Israel.<sup>3</sup> A jubilant crowd greeted Him by waving palm branches and shouting “Hosanna!” to their King.<sup>4</sup>

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But now we are just a few days later, and we encounter Jesus in a much different setting. Handed over to Pontius Pilate, He is no longer treated as a King, but as a criminal facing execution. The confused Pilate asks Him: “Are you the King of the Jews?”<sup>5</sup>

Jesus answers Pilate: “My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be *fighting*... But as it is, my kingdom is not here.”<sup>6</sup>

What a sad and pitiful King. No Kingdom that we can see. Out of place and abandoned. No one *fighting* for Him. Sad...pitiful...and, yes, a *challenge* to each one of us as disciples of Jesus Christ the King. Jesus’ words to Pilate are a *challenge* to us because we have to ask: *Why is no one fighting for Him? Why is His Kingdom not here? Does it have to be this way?*

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On the one hand, Jesus is simply telling Pilate about the reality of the situation: His Kingdom is *not* of this world. We live in a fallen world that is infected by sin. The things of this world will never completely satisfy us, no matter how beautiful or interesting or entertaining they are. The things of this world cannot replace our need for God.

The Good News is that, rather than leave us abandoned in our sin, God “so loved the world that he [sent] his only Son” to be our King. Not “to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”<sup>7</sup> Jesus came to rescue us from sin and show us the way to God; the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

On the other hand, it doesn't *have* to be exactly this way. We don't live in this world simply waiting to be rescued from our misery here in order to be taken away to the glory of Heaven. No, Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven."<sup>8</sup> We constantly pray for God's Kingdom to come – to start breaking through in this world now; and in our hearts now.

That can only happen when Jesus' disciples are *fighting* for it. That can only happen when *we* are *fighting* for it. When we are struggling and striving for good in our own hearts and in our world.<sup>9</sup>

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A few years ago, I was exchanging text messages with a good friend of mine. I was relating about how I was having some spiritual struggles at the time. And she offered me some simple encouragement. She wrote me: "Yes, these things are a struggle. But they're worth *fighting* for."

And ever since then, whenever I'm tempted by despair or discouragement to give up. To say, "What's the use in trying anymore?" I remember my friend's simple advice. *Yes, these things are a struggle. But they're worth fighting for.* The spiritual life is worth *fighting* for. Holiness and Goodness is worth *fighting* for. Jesus Christ the King is worth *fighting* for. And when we're willing to *fight* and struggle against sin and evil, we make this world more and more like the Kingdom of Heaven.

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Oftentimes we come to see that the biggest *fight* and struggle is right *here* – in our own hearts. We might have to *fight* to make time for prayer each day. We might have to *fight* against

a particular vice or sin that tempts us. We might have to *fight* to save or strengthen our marriage or reconcile and heal a relationship with a family member or friend.

Yes, the spiritual life and the life of discipleship *is* a struggle. But it's worth *fighting* for. And when we *fight* for Jesus Christ the King, we come to see that not only is He worth *fighting* for. *He* is the One who helps us in the *fight*.

Because when we pray "Come, Lord Jesus!"<sup>10</sup> He comes to us in our prayer; He comes to us in His Word through the Scriptures; and He comes to us in the Sacraments.<sup>11</sup> In Reconciliation He helps us *fight* against evil by setting us free from our sins.<sup>12</sup> In the Eucharist, He nourishes us with His Body and Blood to strengthen us and help us keep on *fighting*.<sup>13</sup>

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When we see Jesus Christ before Pilate in today's Gospel, we might at first see a sad and pitiful looking King – abandoned, with no one to *fight* for Him. But Jesus doesn't particularly want us to be sad or have pity for Him. On today's Solemnity of Christ the King, He wants us to see Him getting ready to mount His Throne on the Cross!<sup>14</sup> Where His Kingship will not be destroyed!<sup>15</sup> Where He will triumph over sin and death!

Rather than causing us to be sad or have pity, on today's Majestic Feast, Jesus wants to help us answer the question: *What would you fight for?*

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see <https://fightingfor.nd.edu>:

"The University of Notre Dame's award-winning 'What Would You Fight For?' series showcases the work, scholarly achievements, and global impact of Notre Dame faculty, students, and alumni. These two-minute segments, each originally aired during a home football game broadcast on NBC, highlight the University's proud moniker, the Fighting Irish, and tell the stories of the members of the Notre Dame family who fight to bring solutions to a world in need."

<sup>2</sup> John 2:11: "Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs..."

John 20:30: "Now Jesus did many other signs..."

Also see Jesus' Seven Great Signs in the "Book of Signs" found between John 1:19-12:50

<sup>3</sup> Luke 24:21: "But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel..."

<sup>4</sup> John 12:12-19

<sup>5</sup> John 18:33

<sup>6</sup> John 18:36

<sup>7</sup> John 3:16-17

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<sup>8</sup> From *The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)*; see Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2

<sup>9</sup> The Greek word used in the Scripture for "fighting" is ἀγωνίζομαι:

*Strong's Definition (G75)*: "ἀγωνίζομαι, *agōnízomai*, ag-o-nid'-zom-ah-ee; to struggle, literally (to compete for a prize), figuratively (to contend with an adversary), or genitive case (to endeavor to accomplish something):—fight, labor fervently, strive."

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 22:20

<sup>11</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7 and *Lumen Gentium* 11

<sup>12</sup> From *Rite for Reconciliation* 47: "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace."

<sup>13</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 671:

"Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled 'with power and great glory' by the King's return to earth. This reign is still under attack by the evil powers, even though they have been defeated definitively by Christ's Passover. Until everything is subject to him, 'until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in her sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons of God.' That is why Christians pray, above all in the Eucharist, to hasten Christ's return by saying to him: *Marana tha!* 'Our Lord, come!'"

<sup>14</sup> CCC 440: "Hence the true meaning of his kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross."

<sup>15</sup> Daniel 7:14: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, his kingship, one that shall not be destroyed."