

That last part of the title
sounds a lot like Jack's
Grandstanding gesture in the movie Titanic.
“

I cannot imagine Christ
Standing at the prow of some mountain
And bellowing
“I am king of the universe.”

No wonder this Festival is
more commonly referred to
as the **Feast of Christ the King**,

It is a relatively recent addition to the Western liturgical calendar
having been instituted in 1925
by Pope Pius XII
for the Roman Catholic Church.

The “liturgical planning department”
or some such entity at the Vatican
came up with this Feast
during those tumultuous post World War I years
When dozens of rulers lost their thrones
To a new gang of hooligans
in Europe and elsewhere.

In the 1920s and 1930s,
The world was beginning to be run
by the likes of
Generalissimo Francisco Franco in Spain
Benito Mussolini in Italy,
Emperor Hirohito in Japan,
and of course the big kahuna,
Herr Adolf Hitler in Germany.

I suppose these bright-minded liturgical planners
may have been trying to say
“looky there- here's a REAL King for you!”

Now we've passed
another couple of generations since then
and there are very few rulers
in actual government left
who bear such titles-
King or Queen or whatever.

So..... this Sunday' IS starting

to look a little outmoded-
like a liturgical leisure suit
or maxi skirt
(remember those?).

Modern folks can
and indeed sometimes do
inclusify the name of this Sunday
with titles like "Christ the Ruler"
or the "Realm of Christ" Sunday-

Such changes point rightly
to the non-gendered
and egalitarian nature
of what the New Testament
calls the "Kingdom of God."

But I'd offer another reason
for keeping this Sunday intact,
even if it has to be renamed.

As in every generation,
we are still beset by things
which claim rulership over us-
whether they be
certain politicians,
our jobs,
family problems,
economic woes
or whatever.

Sadly,
Even religion itself
And fundamentalist religious leaders
In every religion
Sometimes mount a despotic throne,
Presuming to dictate
what we all should
Think, believe say and do.

These times all press in
pretty close sometimes
and sometimes
Precisely because they are so all consuming-
They threaten to take over
our thought processes
Our decision making,

Our lives.

The despotic forces of this world
With single-minded fanaticism
And sister only their ideas are important, their social structures, their people.

The kingdom of God is never like that.

none of those things are really in control
of us
OR of the world.

this Sunday's readings
and Jesus our Teacher
with his very life
point us toward the fact that
it is GOD who controls the world
through the power of love and compassion.

what is important about any social system, organized belief system,
nation
community
church or
family
is how we express that compassion.

Jesus parable of the last judgment reminds us
That
The prisoner visited,
the hungry fed,
the naked clothed,
the mourning comforted.

These activities and their like
constitute the rules and activities
of GOD'S Realm-
and the gates of hell itself
cannot prevail against them.

in the final judgment,
Jesus parable reminds us
That it is love That wins the day,
Not power.

It is acts Of compassion,
neighbor to neighbor,

Family member to family member

that hold our lives together,
and give us meaning,

This parable and its message of love
Hold special meaning for me.

It was Thanksgiving 1997 – almost exactly 20 years ago this week.

As a post graduate student at Notre Dame I was privileged to attend the society for biblical literature conference in New Orleans.

I was freshly separated from my wife and planning to move to Chicago from South Bend to finish my dissertation and begin a new life alone.

My ex-wife was planning to take our two sons Eric and Matthew, four and six back to the Twin Cities in Minnesota Where are extended family lived And could offer support.

On Sunday morning as was my practice I attended mass –at the Cathedral on the Square.

I don't often have visions.

But when the officiant got up to read this gospel
The Grand cathedral church-faded away

All I could see in front of me was Jesus kneeling with his arms gently around the shoulders of my two sons and he said to me that day only six words

These are your least of these.

Partially stunned, I stumbled back to my hotel room and called my soon to be ex-wife and gave her the news:

The Chicago plans were dropped – I was moving back to Minnesota so I could coparent our sons with her after the divorce.

Not for single day have I ever regretted the decision.

Giving up my post graduate studies to be with my sons was probably the one right thing I've ever done

In demonstration of God's compassion.

This is how Christ rules,
this is how Christ rolls

Do the compassionate thing

Be the compassion of God for those around you.

Let God's kingdom,
God's realm
come.

Amen.

the Rev. Phil Boelter, Obl OSB
St John's Episcopal Church