

**Christ the King** (Lk 23:35-43; Col 1:12-20)      **20 November 2022**

**Knight for our King**      A few weeks ago, I was given the opportunity to meet with some of our confirmation candidates. In preparation for that meeting, I reflected upon my own confirmation nearly 50 years ago. My most vivid memory of that sacramental encounter is the slap that I received from the Bishop slapped! Honestly, he slapped me and I didn't even say or even do anything wrong. For those who don't know, up until the mid 1970's, (re-enact), using sacred Chrism oil and making the sign of cross, the bishop would anoint the person being confirmed on the forehead, with the words:"be sealed with the Holy Spirit" and then the bishop slap the recipient on the cheek. Ok, it was actually just a tap on the cheek, but it was meant to be a dramatic gesture.

That ceremonial slap can trace its origins to the days of the first knights, knights with a K that is. Before kings and queens started using a sword to touch the shoulders of one to be knighted, the common practice in many regions was to slap the new knight. The slap was meant to harden that knight for battle. In our Catholic tradition, we were told that the bishop's slap symbolized our willingness to suffer as soldiers for Christ and defenders of the faith. Personally, I was excited to be knighted into service for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I suppose my excitement originated in my admiration for the entire medieval genre. For I have long been enamored with the thought of being an honorable knight, cloaked in silver armor, trumpeting the cause of good over evil. What greater honor could there be than to wield a sword of justice and to quest for the holy grail. Clearly, I've seen too many movies about King Arthur and his knights of the round table.

Please forgive my romanticism. But oftentimes, as I stand at the back of our church, waiting to process in, I look around and I see these massive limestone walls with the arched ceiling. I imagine the pews are gone and I see the carpet leading down the center aisle to the altar and the presider's chair, and I am

reminded of the great castles of old. Sometimes I can even hear the faint clapping of coconut shells (Monty Python reference). Seriously, remove the altar from view, and the chair in which Fr. Rick sits could easily pass for a throne. Then, as we approach that throne and reach the end of the aisle, we stop, and we bow to our King. However, in this instance, our King is not sitting upon a royal throne, but instead can be found hanging from his cross. For our King is like no other.

History is filled with Kings motivated most often by their thirst for power or wealth or the expansion of their territory. Kings who feared and attempted to conquer their rivals. Kings who demanded tribute and adulation and obedience from their subjects. And I imagine all human kings, even the most benevolent among them, demanded that their superiority be recognized. How very different is our King, Christ the King. Our King rules purely by the power of love - unconditional, self-sacrificing infinite love. Our King doesn't even demand our love in return. Instead, he gives us the gift of free will. Whether we accept Christ as our King is entirely up to us.

However, if we do choose to call Christ our king, if we choose to become his knights, then we are challenged to earnestly seek and pursue a holy grail of compassion and forgiveness. We are called to commit ourselves to the holy grail of loving the seemingly unlovable and we are challenged to thirst for the holy grail of establishing an earthly kingdom of peace, justice and love. For those who choose to don the armor of Christ's love, who choose to suffer as soldiers of Christ, those knights can hope to join our Lord and King around the table of his heavenly kingdom. Part of me hopes that Christ the King's heavenly table is round.