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As I was preparing for the Feast of Christ the King, I thought it might be interesting to search online for the greatest king in history. The first result was a preview of a list of the greatest kings in history. I did not expect to find Jesus Christ on that list, but I was surprised that the name at the very top of the list was Genghis Khan. Genghis Khan, as many of you know, was the great 12th and 13th century Mongolian Warlord who conquered China and founded the largest empire the world has ever known. He was a brutal warrior-king, was ruthless and vile, and had numerous wives and concubines. To his credit, he is said to have been quite the diplomat, he was tolerant of many faiths and the clergy of all, exempted the poor and religious from taxes, and gave rights to women. But even the good that Genghis Khan did is overshadowed by his brutal deeds. For example, historical legend states that he killed over 1.7 million inhabitants of an Iranian city in the span of an hour.

According to the same list, the second greatest king in history was Alexander the Great. This great general conquered most of the ancient, civilized world in the 4th century B.C. but died as a young alcoholic on a campaign to extend his empire. Unlike Genghis Khan he had no heirs, and his empire was quickly divided among his friends.

We are taught that the greatest kings and queens of the world were great conquerors and founded long lasting dynasties. In Europe, the greatest kings and queens were those who not only founded lasting family houses but also brought peace to their kingdoms. The likes of Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria of England and King Louis the XIV, “the Sun King” of France brought splendor and peace to their kingdoms, but not to every land and subject under their rule. It is curious though that the lists of great monarchs of history do not include those kings and queens that the Church thinks are truly great, like Saint Louis, King of France, Saint Edward the Confessor, King of England, Saint Helena, Empress of Rome, or Saint Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary. We remember also some who are considered royal martyrs, like King Charles I of England, and Czar Nicholas and Czarina Alexandria of the Russias, who though often cast in a negative light, and embroiled in politics, gave their lives for the Church. These kings and queens are the greatest in the history according to the Church because they were executed being faithful Christians. But even among these great and holy royals, there is none who have given their lives as a sacrifice for their people.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, and by doing so we proclaim that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are taught that regardless of political leanings, regardless of the city, state, or

country that we inhabit, we must confess that Jesus Christ is our King, and that we and our rulers are His subjects. We are given a glimpse of the type of King Jesus is in this Gospel lesson. Jesus admits that He is a King to Pilate the Roman Governor, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.* Of course, Rome had the real earthly power over the Israel of Jesus' day, for they had crushed uprising after uprising in Jerusalem. And with this recent history in mind, Rome would have been suspicious of anyone claiming to be any kind of king in opposition to Caesar. Thus, when Jesus admits that He is a king to Pilate, Pilate might have been more than a bit curious about the nature of his self-conscious kingship.

Jesus confesses that He is a king. Yet, what kind of king was he? He had already been betrayed by Judas, and most of His closest disciples and followers have abandoned Him. He confessed that He was a king, but when Pilate presented Him to the rabble outside his palace saying, *behold your king!* His own people begged for Him to be crucified. So this strange king was taken away scourged and tortured nearly to death. He is the King of kings and they crown Him with thorns. He is Lord of lords, and they mock Him and give Him a dingy old purple robe to wear. The scepter of the Kingdom of Heaven was rightfully His and they gave Him a reed to hold in his wounded hands. Instead of enthroning Him, they nailed Him to a cross. Instead of bowing down before Him, they stood around mocking and spitting on Him. And, still, Pilate had written, above Him, on the Cross, in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew: *Jesus of Nazareth the King of Jews.*

Has any king or queen, has any president or ruler given their life as a sacrifice for their people? It does not seem that the history books can give an answer to this question. Even among the holy kings and queens which the Church recognizes as saints and martyrs, it seems that not one sacrificed his life for his subjects. Only Jesus Christ gives His life a ransom for many and lays down his life for his friends, that as many as might hear his voice should be freed from sin and live forever in His heavenly Kingdom. Jesus Christ is the kind of king that this world has never known. Jesus Christ came to be a Ruler whose Rule would be manifested in giving his life for all others, delivering God's mercy and forgiveness to all others, healing all others, helping all others. Jesus Christ came to be a King who promised to bring all others to His Kingdom. Here is a king who rules from the Cross of shame. A King whose death became the seedbed of new life. A King whose kingdom is opened to men beginning with the sharing of His death with all those who would make it their own, a spiritual death, through

Him. Here is the Everlasting Son of God who as King stoops down to enter the hearts of sinful men in order to change, convert, and save them. Here is the King, who as a Suffering Servant of God, is the King who saves His people!

At the end of the world all of humanity will again hear a voice say *behold your King!* We are told that then *every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.* Then shall stand before Christ's throne for judgment every person who has ever lived, every man, woman, king, or queen. To those who have accepted and embraced the Cross of Christ will hear the great King of Kings say, *come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Amen.