

## The King's Call

Daniel 7:13-14

Psalm 93

Revelation 1:5-8

John 18:33b-37

The Jesuit author, David Fleming, summed up the spiritual life in a very simple way—“God calls. We respond.”<sup>1</sup> God, who is Love, is constantly calling to us, loving us, inviting us to Himself and to His mission. He desires our wholehearted, loving *response*. Saint Ignatius of Loyola imagined God’s call to us as being similar to that of a king calling his loyal subjects to follow him into battle. In a meditation entitled, “Kingdom of Christ,” in his Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius describes Christ as a King who perfectly loves all of His subjects and to whom everyone pays “reverence and obedience.”<sup>2</sup> Ignatius then invites us to come to understand our relationship with Christ the King by meditating on an earthly king’s call to his subjects—

“It is my will to conquer all infidel lands. Therefore, whoever wishes to come with me must be content to eat as I eat, drink as I drink, dress as I dress, etc. He must also be willing to work with me by day, and watch with me by night. He will then share with me in victory as he has shared in the toils”<sup>3</sup>

According to Saint Ignatius, there is only one proper response to such a request from a loving king—to zealously follow him; anything less would only lead to our embarrassment and being despised by others.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, the Patron of our parish. This is a wonderful time for us to be reminded that our King loves us and invites us to respond to His love. Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s meditation on the “Kingdom of Christ” helps us to see three important dynamics of the call of Christ the King and our response. First, it begins with love. If we have not already experienced Christ’s unbelievable, eternal love for us it will be impossible for us to adequately respond to His call and follow Him. In other words, we will not be able to “eat as [He] eats, [and] drink as [He] drinks.”

This was the exact point that Jesus was trying to make with James and John when He asked them, “Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”<sup>4</sup> The only motivation strong enough to keep us beside the King when things get difficult is *love*!

Last weekend I co-directed a retreat at Subiaco for college students. During the retreat, several of them shared personal experiences of the King’s eternal love for them. It was such an amazing experience to hear how God had loved them in particular, personal ways. For example, one young man shared how he has struggled with the idea that God might be calling him to the priesthood despite the fact that he wants to be married. One day, while walking through a park, the young man was sharing with God his anguish over trying to discern His will and trying to make a decision about the future when, all of a sudden, a gentle breeze blew past him and he

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ignatianspirituality.com/what-is-ignatian-spirituality/god-calls-we-respond/>

<sup>2</sup> Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius of Loyola, week two, part one, first point

<sup>3</sup> Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius of Loyola, week two, part one, second point

<sup>4</sup> Mark 10:38

experienced a tremendous peace. He immediately had a sense that God loved him and was not asking Him to struggle with discerning at that time. Such simple, yet profound, experiences like this help reaffirm for us that God loves us and they provide the motivation we need to get through the difficulties and sufferings that often come with following Christ the King.

Once we've experienced Christ's love, then we're ready to begin listening for His call. It's important for us to define this "call" in very general terms. On one level it definitely entails our vocational call—like a call into marriage, singlehood, priesthood, or religious life. But it also entails the daily calls from God for us to be obedient in little things, like being more patient with a loved one, spending more time with a child, choosing not to commit a favorite sin, saying a kind word, etc. Once we've experienced the King's love, we are more willing to listen to what He is asking of us, both in the big things and the little things.

Having heard the King's gentle invitation for us to be with Him in a particular way, we must respond. "God calls. We respond." It's that simple; it's that difficult. The more we become aware of the reality of Christ's Kingship, the more diligent we become in responding wholeheartedly to His call. We even find ourselves embarrassed when we fail to respond to His call. In fact, the more we are aware of Christ's Kingship, the more we find ourselves embarrassed for not responding to even His smallest, quietest, and simplest invitations! Conversely, the more aware we become of Christ's Kingship in our lives, the more blessed we feel when we respond to His call, even when we respond a bit reluctantly.

One of the other college students on the retreat last weekend shared with us an experience she had at a Wendy's restaurant while eating a Baconator. She explained that she was sitting alone eating when she saw a man in another part of the restaurant eating alone and she felt prompted to go and sit with him. She quickly explained to God that the idea of going up to a stranger—a scruffy male stranger—and striking up a conversation was ludicrous, even dangerous. However, God continued to nag her about it until she reluctantly got up and brought her food over to the man's table and asked if she could join him. They had a wonderful conversation that reminded the young woman of God's particular love for her and for other people.

Having finished eating, she got up and went out to her car to leave and realized that her car battery was dead. The man whom she had sat with happened to have jumper cables and got her car going before they went their separate ways. The young woman's reluctant "yes" to God's call was not only a blessing to the man in the restaurant, but it also became a blessing to her in various cool ways.

Our celebration today gives us an opportunity to meditate on the awesome fact that Jesus Christ is the eternal King who loves us, calls us, and desires our loving response. Let us pray that we will be more and more willing to respond wholeheartedly to Him, following Him in every situation so that the whole world might know that Jesus Christ is King.

### **SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:**

- ✚ Read 1 John 4:19 and reflect on one concrete, specific way that God has revealed His love to you.
- ✚ Read Mark 10:35-40. What struggles, difficulties, and sufferings has God invited you to endure with Him? What gives you the strength to "drink the cup" that He drinks?