

April 10

Holy Monday

WE HAVE NO KING BUT JESUS

John 19:1-15

If our democracy collapsed and you were made king or queen, what would be your first major decision and why?

John's Gospel is saturated with irony regarding the true identity of Jesus. And this story, Pilate's final interrogation of Jesus before He is crucified, is no exception. To appease the Jewish leadership, Pilate mockingly endows Jesus with a crown of thorns, drapes Him in the purple of royalty, dramatically displaying Him, "Behold, the man" (19:5). But at this point, Pilate views Jesus as harmless. However, the Jewish leadership will have none of it, eventually spelling out the implications for Pilate: "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar" (19:12). In a cruel twist, Pilate reverses the tables, sits down on the "seat of judgment," taunting them with the tortured Jesus, "Is this your king" (19:13, 15)? In their desperation to reject Him, the Jewish leadership publically (and ironically) reveal their complicity with Rome—"we have no king but Caesar" (19:15).

The irony of this story is, of course, that the real King is before them, refusing to play their political games. True sovereignty is revealed in Jesus, who calmly trusts the will of His Father, even through rejection and suffering. Lent is a time to reflect on the true nature of our trust and loyalty. While we do not live under the sovereignty of an emperor today, many powers in the world still demand our allegiance. Following the likes of the philosopher, Nietzsche, who virtually wrote his own passion story in *Ecce Homo* (Behold, the man), we moderns have proclaimed the sovereignty of the self— *we have no king but me*. We have enthroned our desires and our will on the "seat of judgment." The path of redemption, however, is to deny ourselves, surrendering to Jesus, who because of the cross is the true sovereign. Our confession, therefore, is the direct opposite of the world's credo— *we have no king but Jesus*.

Where in your life do you find yourself locked in a struggle for power, either in your home, your work place, or your church? How might the way of Jesus free us to trust the will of the Father in this situation?

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