

Election Season Homily (given on 29th/30th in year B)

In the pagan world, it was commonplace to worship the kings and leaders of one's city or nation. This is deeply contrasted by the Kingdom of Israel: while Israel had a king, it is clear to the people that they are not supposed to worship him, and clear to the king he is not supposed to be worshiped.

In the Book of Daniel, the Israelites are living in a foreign land ruled by a king who *does* demand their worship. That would be King Nebuchadnezzar, who throws the 3 youths into a furnace because they will not worship him.

Yet, the answer to that for the faithful Judahites in Babylon is not, "No, you're to have nothing to do with that wicked pagan king - stay separate from him, anarchy, oppose him."

No, it's not that at all, but rather: "No, you don't pray to him or worship him; you pray *for* him. You offer sacrifices *for* him, you offer prayers *for* him. You offer incense *for* him, to the true God, to the one true God, who is that leader's creator."

There are multiple places in Scripture where it says to pray for the king. For instance, Jeremiah 29:7 - "And seek the peace of the city, where I have caused you to live in captivity; pray for it to the Lord: for in its peace you will have peace.

Translation: support your nation (and local community) by praying for it.

There's something you're called to do.

And it's super applicable to us today, where we are in the midst of a tense political period, and sometimes praying for a particular government official or a particular candidate for office is taken as a kind of endorsement. But the Scripture tells us to pray even for pagan kings who are actively slaughtering the people of God.

Let me put a finer point on that. In 1 Timothy 2:1-2, St. Paul says, "Therefore I exhort, first of all, that entreaties be made, prayers, intercessions, and eucharists, on behalf of all, on behalf of kings, and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a calm and peaceful life in all godliness and sanctity."

St. Paul is saying that in the Roman Empire. Much of St. Paul's ministry was conducted under the reign of Caligula; Google him if you don't know who that guy is. He is known for his cruelty and madness.

If St. Paul can pray for Caligula, if St. Paul's approach is "we need to pray for him and hope that he will find Christ," and that that's what we *all* need to be doing, then I don't care how much you hate the current president, or the previous president, or the two seeking to be elected to the office of president right now - you can pray for them too. In fact, it's Scripture's directive that you do.

If Scripture's directive to pray for the authorities - **all** authorities - still finds a resistant disposition within you, then I conclude this homily with an alternate thought:

If you become angry and enraged at this or that politician and their sins, do you get equally angry and upset at your own sins as much as you are with theirs, or do you focus on their sins but ignore your own or give yourself permission for your own? Sometimes we focus on the sins of others so that we don't have to look at our own (looking at the beam in another's eye so we don't have to focus on removing the beam in our own). Our sins are not any less ruinous to a soul than theirs simply because theirs are well known. Something to remember.

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