

1. Back when I was in Seminary,
 - a. every January the Archdiocese would pile us all into a bus
 - b. and take us for an overnight trip to DC.
2. We were required to go to Washington,
 - a. So that we could participate in the pro life march
 - b. that happens there every year.
3. Many of the guys hated it; I could understand why.
 - a. The trip was long; the march could often be freezing.
4. But frankly I was fascinated by the varieties of groups that marched.
5. Catholics make up only a part of the march,
 - a. There was everyone from Aryans to gays,
 - b. feminists to homeschooling moms, their kids in tow
6. However, some groups were more present than others.
7. One group in particular was particularly fabulous.
 - a. They marched in red uniforms,
 - b. pounded on drums
 - c. Carried enormous red flags at the end of tall poles.
 - d. Emblazoned on their uniforms and on their flags were three letters; TFP.
8. After the march I asked a classmate who they were.
 - a. He told me the TFP stood for Tradition, Family and Property.
 - b. They were a group that wanted to do away with our democratic government
 - c. and establish a monarchy in America.
9. I busted out laughing - "WHAT are you KIDDING?"
10. But he just looked at me, and said,
 - a. "Well you know, a monarchy is really the kind of government God wants."
11. He pointed out that
 - a. when we speak of God as a ruler what do we call God? A King.
 - b. When we speak of God's rule, what do we call it? A Kingdom.
 - i. A king is strong - like God;
 - ii. a king rules with a firm hand - like God.
 - iii. A king rules alone; like God.
12. And thus
 - a. if we really want God's kingdom to come
 - b. And God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven,
 - c. like Jesus taught us to pray
 - d. what should be have? A king.
13. I was dumbfounded at his answer. I think any of us would be.
14. For He was American;
 - a. a citizen of a country that was founded by a revolution against a kingdom - the Kingdom of England.
15. Moreover, he was an American Catholic,
 - a. who should know that his Irish ancestors found freedom to worship here
 - b. precisely because we did not have a divinely appointed king,
 - i. but a democratically elected president.
16. Who could possibly think that when given the choice, God chooses kings!?
 - a. Evidently my friend did; and so did his red uniformed buddies

17. And so did the writer of this morning's first reading.
 - a. Because he tells the story of King David,
 - b. God's chosen leader of the people of Israel.
18. David had been far from a perfect leader.
 - a. There was the rebellion he had fought against Saul, Israel's first king.
 - b. There was the affair with Bathsheba,
 - c. and of course the murder of her husband, Uriah.
19. And yet towards the end of David's life, when David decides to honor God by finally building God a house, a permanent temple in Jerusalem,
20. God responds that David will not build God a house; God will build DAVID a house; a kingdom, which will last forever.
21. This promise was remembered by the priests who first heard it,
22. and of course by David's descendants.
23. But it was also remembered by David's people,
 - a. The people of Israel
 - i. Despite the fact king David was a sinner,
 - ii. David's successor was his bastard son Solomon
 - iii. After Solomon the kingdom split,
 - iv. And eventually was destroyed,
24. Despite these things and maybe because of them,
 - a. The people of Israel clung to this promise
 - b. And did not give up hope that one day
25. That God would give them what they wanted; a king.
 - a. A strong King who would rule with a firm hand
 - b. And make sure that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 - c. Especially since, in the face of war and suffering, disappointment and death it seemed that it so seldom was.
26. There was a Jewish king in the first Century; his name was Herod.
 - a. He was put there as a ruler subject to the Roman Empire.
 - b. But he was wicked and cruel;
 - c. And his connections with the Emperor
 - i. who people said was a God made him an unclean sinner.
27. WE have to understand this history,
 - a. in order to understand the story we hear in today's Gospel.
28. For in a world
 - a. where kings were evil and rulers unclean,
 - b. Where people used their power to oppress people
 - c. Rather than to liberate them
29. The story was told about an angel
 - a. who came to announce to a young woman
 - b. that she would be the mother of a king
 - c. For God would give him the throne of David his father,
 - d. And He would finally fulfill the promises God made to David,
 - i. for his kingdom would last forever.
30. This story is so familiar to us,

- a. that we miss the one thing that would have stood out like a sore thumb to the people in the first century.
- 31. For if a king wants something done; he does it;
 - a. it should be no different with God;
- 32. But when Gabriel comes and announces to Mary that she has been chosen,
 - a. He answers her questions,
 - b. Reassures her of God's motives!
- 33. And then waits for this young Jewish woman to make up her mind!
 - a. A king who consults;
 - b. a patient ruler who invites rather than commands
 - c. was not the kind of king
 - d. most people who yearn for a strong king have in mind.
- 34. But then the child who was to be born of Mary would not be either.
 - a. He would not be one who ruled with a firm hand,
 - i. but with an open one
 - b. One whose strength would be found in his words,
 - i. not his weapons,
 - c. And one who would never rule alone,
 - i. but would surround himself with family and friends,
 - ii. disciples and apostles,
 - iii. and create a kingdom of people,
 - iv. all of whom
 - 1. chose freely to follow him,
 - 2. to serve with him rather than under him
 - 3. and invite others to do the same.
- 35. Little wonder they eventually killed him.
 - a. For this was not the King we wanted.
- 36. But also little wonder that God raised him from the dead;
 - a. Because God knew that Jesus was king we needed.
- 37. That friend who was so enthused about Tradition, Family and Property eventually became a priest in another diocese;
- 38. I have not seen him for years.
- 39. I do not know whether he has changed his views.
 - a. But in the face of terror and war, with the looming possibility of economic recession and bankruptcy I do know that many other share them;
 - b. For it is so tempting for many to long for a king,
 - c. who will rule in God's place and make sure that god's will be done.
- 40. But we dare never forget
- 41. that when God responded to that longing and answered that prayer;
- 42. God gives us Jesus,
 - a. who does not order but invites,
 - b. does not impose but proposes,
 - c. who does not RULE as much as he leads his church
 - i. to see to it that God's will IS done on earth as in heaven;
 - ii. but not because Jesus does it or forces us to
 - iii. but because we like Mary freely chose to.