

## Solemnity of Christ the King

Most of us are probably familiar with the concept of six degrees of separation. It's the idea that anyone on the planet can be connected to anyone else in just six steps. In other words, through just five other people, you and I are effectively connected to the Queen of England, Pope Francis, and even a Mongolian sheep herder. "An old wives tale", you say! "Is there really any scientific evidence to back this so-called theory up"? Well, from my research, assuming that everyone knows at least 44 people, which is a pretty safe assumption, especially with the advent of social media. And each of those people knows an entirely new 44 people – again very likely – and so on and so forth for the next four people. Then, the math shows that in just six steps everyone could be connected to  $44^6$  people, which is about 7.26 billion people – right around the number of people alive on Earth today!

So yes, it's quite possible that the six degrees of separation theory is true. And it's a good reminder of how connected to everyone we truly are. For example, my spiritual director has a family member who has a friend who has a friend who was killed in the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris last week. And that's only four degrees of separation. We're more connected than you think! And when it comes to witnessing to our faith, this connection is just as relevant, not to mention, important.

Well first of all, what do I mean by witnessing to our faith? In today's Gospel, Pontus Pilate interrogates Jesus to find out if He's guilty of the charges that the Jews are asserting. In his line of questioning, Pilate pointedly asks Jesus: "Then you are a king?" To which Jesus answers, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, **to testify to the truth**. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." In other words, the whole reason Jesus is a King at all is to testify to the truth. The definition of testify is to bear witness to something. So, Jesus is a witness to the Truth. And we, as disciples of Jesus, are called to give witness to our faith in Him.

Let's apply the six degrees of separation theory here. Jesus gave witness to the Truth. Peter gave witness to Jesus. The popes, as the successors of Peter, all through the ages have given witness to the primacy of Peter. Pope Francis is the most recent pope in this apostolic succession. When I was in Rome a few years ago, I met Pope Francis – well, kind of, I was about 2 feet from him in St. Peter's Square when he passed by in the "pope mobile". And you all know me. So, literally by six connections (of sorts) you are connected with the Truth that Jesus Himself came as King of the Universe to witness to. Wow!

The thing is Sunday after Sunday we hear Gospel accounts of the truth that Jesus did incredible things like miraculously healing the sick, and even raising the dead. And in other parts of the New Testament, we hear how Jesus' Apostles, like St. Peter, performed other miracles even greater than these! Then, stretching down through the centuries, we hear astounding truths of how the Blessed Mother astonishingly appeared to a variety of people at various times. We hear about such true things, but many times, they just seem like stories of things that happened to other people at other times in other places. And even though they're all rather closely connected through this six degrees of separation thing, they still seem too remote.

But now, if I were to tell you the absolutely true story of a man I was travelling with on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, whose foot was simply miraculously cured by God – not explainable in any other way – that gets you a little closer to believing in the truth of miracles. And then, if I were to tell you how in my very own life God has miraculously healed me of a condition that I had had for many years, it draws you in even more, because you know *me*.

The truth of the matter is – the more immediate the connection, the more powerful the witness. The witness of Peter to the miracles that Jesus performed is absolutely true. But my witness to you of the miracles I've seen Jesus perform with my own eyes makes it all come alive to the point that it's a lot harder to dismiss as unlikely or far-fetched.

And think of all the people who have witnessed their faith to us – our parents, our grandparents, clergy and religious, friends and coworkers. What if they had not witnessed their faith to us? Where would we be?

Pope Paul VI stated that the Church exists in order to witness to our faith in Jesus Christ (evangelize). To witness, we just simply tell the story of how God is working in our lives. But that begs the question – how is God working in our lives? Or asked another way – what are we working on in our own lives right now with God's grace? For me right now God is working with me in the area of control – in particular, not trying to control situations that are beyond my control. Anyone else need to work on that area? Probably a lot of us! Here's my witness to you of what God is doing in my life. It's been a difficult journey, since for the majority of my life I've tried to control everything from what career I would pursue to what other people do. But because of surrendering this control to God, who is ultimately in control, things have truly gotten better for me. For example, I've become aware that this is a weakness of mine in the first place. And, I can identify with others who struggle with this. I can recognize it in others to perhaps help them. And, I have more peace in my life now because I know who's really in control!

So, how does your faith in Jesus make a difference in your life? How has He transformed you in one area or another? Since we're all sinners, professing our need for God to save us from our sins, we should all be able to answer that question. But, Jesus cannot transform us unless we let Him be the King of our hearts and the Lord of our lives. When we seek to live in such a way, then miracles do happen and our lives are transformed. And then we can really have something to witness to – our own experience! And when it comes to our own experiences, we're all pros! We don't have to study up on our own experience – we just know what's happened to us. Then all we have to do is share that transformation experience with at least one other person. And before we know it we're witnessing to Jesus, who is witness to the Truth that we have become a new creation in Him. What Good News! God bless you.