

Solemnity of Christ the King
34th and Last Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle B)
November 25, 2012 -- Deacon Bill Nourse, Ed.D.

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. Last Sunday was the last Sunday we'll wear green vestments until January 20. Next Sunday we'll be in violet, beginning the penitential season of Advent. But today it's Christ the King.

Christ the King . . . I suppose it's not too easy for most of us to get a handle on the idea of a king in today's world. I thought it might help to take a look at Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quas Primas*, which established this feast in 1925.

Pius XI declared Christ's universal kingship. He wrote, "Jesus is King by right of nature and by conquest." He wrote that by right of nature, Christ "possesses . . . power over all creatures, not that he seized it by violence, nor received it from another, but he possesses it by his own nature and essence; his power comes from that wonderful union which is called by theologians hypostatic. [ASIDE: the hypostatic union is the union of the divine and human natures of Christ]. For this reason Christ is to be adored not only as God by angels and men, but these angels and men owe submission and obedience to him also as man."

We owe submission and obedience to Him as a king.

Remember that *Quas Primas* was promulgated in 1925. When Pius XI instituted the Solemnity of Christ the King, he was primarily responding to the excesses of Marxism and secular humanism of the time, which sought to erase the name of Jesus Christ from human memory.

The Russian Revolution had taken place in 1917. Traditional religion and its clergy was targeted by Soviet authorities. The

Soviet Union was the first state to have elimination of religion as an ideological objective. The Marxist regime confiscated church property, ridiculed religion, harassed believers, and propagated atheism in schools. Most organized religions were never actually outlawed. But religious observance was suppressed in many ways. Some believers were committed to mental hospitals. Some were tortured. Some were executed.

Thousands of churches and monasteries were taken over by the government and either destroyed or converted to "museums." New churches could not be built. The Soviet state sought to eradicate what they termed "superstition."

The Soviet government declared the separation of church and state and seized all church-held property. In the first five years after the Bolshevik revolution, 28 bishops and 1,200 priests were executed.

That is the backdrop for Pius XI's encyclical establishing the Solemnity of Christ the King.

It may not come as a surprise to you that there are many people today, many Americans, who think all that was just fine. They regret that the Bolsheviks were unsuccessful, and think we should emulate them today. They characterize all religion as "superstition." People of faith should not be allowed to express themselves in public on the issues of the day. If they do, or even if they don't, their churches should be taxed, preferably taxed out of existence. These people insist that sharing religious beliefs with children is a form of child abuse. Murdering them while still in the womb, of course, is not. If you knew what some of these people believe, it would frighten you to death. But they are out there, right here in America, and there are a lot of them. Do not doubt it.

Mark Twain said, "History does not repeat itself. But it does rhyme." We will soon discover whether or not our time rhymes with 1925.

Today's Solemnity of Christ the King was established to oppose that sort of bigotry. And it's no less relevant today than it was in 1925. We must not allow ourselves to be barred from participating in civil life. Pius XI wrote, "It would be a grave error . . . to say that Christ has no authority whatever in civil affairs, since, by virtue of the absolute empire over all creatures committed to him by the Father, all things are in his power."

Today we call to mind the truth of Christ's royalty in the context of the relationship between the Church and the modern world, today's world. We are a royal priesthood, participants in his life and nature. We must be freed from every type of slavery, in favor of a purified life in Christ.

In an earlier encyclical, *Ubi Arcano*, Pius XI pointed out that "the manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics: and we said further, that as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Savior, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations. Men must look for the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ . . . "

And yet, when Jesus answered Pilate, He said, "My kingdom does not belong to this world . . . 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."

How to reconcile these two apparently contradictory beliefs? Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and yet we believe that there

is no hope for lasting peace and justice in this world unless we submit ourselves -- the whole world -- to the will of Christ.

The Second Vatican Council, in *Gaudium et Spes*, said:

“While helping the world and receiving many benefits from it, the Church has a single intention: that God’s Kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race may come to pass. For every benefit which the People of God during its earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is “the universal sacrament of salvation,” manifesting the mystery of God’s love.

We are not part of a constantly turning wheel, an endless cycle of birth, growth, death. We are on a journey, toward the consummation of human history, to what Pierre Teilhard de Chardin called the “Omega Point.” As Paul wrote in Ephesians, “To reestablish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth.” In today’s reading from Revelation, we hear “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.”

We have a special participation in Christ’s royal priesthood. We are called to exercise it in works that promote the human person, acting as leaven in society spreading the Gospel spirit in our workplaces and homes. We are called to give witness to Christ’s kingship through our testimony and works to the glory of Christ the King. Even when people call us “superstitious.” Even when people insist we are abusing our children by bringing them up in the faith. Even when they want us to sit down and shut up. We are called to speak the truth even louder and more insistently.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

READINGS

Reading 1

Dn 7:13-14

As the visions during the night continued, I saw
one like a Son of man coming,
on the clouds of heaven;
when he reached the Ancient One
and was presented before him,
the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship;
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 93:1, 1-2, 5

R. (1a) The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.
The LORD is king, in splendor robed;
robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.
R. The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.
And he has made the world firm,
not to be moved.
Your throne stands firm from of old;
from everlasting you are, O LORD.
R. The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.
Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, for length of days.
R. The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.

Reading 2

Rv 1:5-8

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness,
the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,
to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him.
All the peoples of the earth will lament him.
Yes. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, " says the Lord God,
"the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

Gospel

Jn 18:33b-37

Pilate said to Jesus,
"Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own
or have others told you about me?"
Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I?
Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me.
What have you done?"
Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world.
If my kingdom did belong to this world,
my attendants would be fighting
to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.
But as it is, my kingdom is not here."
So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?"
Jesus answered, "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."