

Homily Notes for Christ the King A Nov 26 2017

Readings: EZ 34: 11-12, 15-17; I COR 15:20-26, 28; MT 25: 31-46

Theme: Today do an examination of the state of our discipleship, then use Advent as a time for resolutions.

1. Introduction: The Church celebrates the feast of Christ the King on the last Sunday, the 34th in Ordinary Time of her liturgical year. Jesus is presented here as our King and Lord who has absolute power over our salvation. And he is presented as being present to us in the “least of my brothers.” It was Pope Pius XI who introduced this feast in the liturgy in 1925.

The radical relevance of this feast.

2. Let us think back historically to put this encyclical in perspective. What was going on in 1925? Mussolini had been in power for three years. Adolf Hitler had been out of jail only a year, and was finding great popular support for his fledgling Nazi party. This Feast was also introduced to counteract the rising tide of secularism and communism. Pope Pius XI wanted people to know that this was Christ's world, not the property of the emerging dictators of that day. While the encyclical that established this feast was addressed, according to the custom of the time, to the Catholic Bishops, [Pope Pius XI](#) wanted the Feast to impact the laity:

The Pope had the courage of his convictions to declare, despite dictators, that Christ was King, reminding Christians where their ultimate loyalty lay! This feast is presented to challenge the world to obedience to Christ. How different history between 1930 and 1989 would have been had there been such obedience! This feast also demonstrates why the Christian Church, from time to time, must address political as well as personal questions.

3. Preparing ourselves to serve our “King”. Although emperors and kings now exist mostly in history books, the rule and authority of God is fundamentally important and so we confess Christ as the King of the Universe, by enthroning him in our hearts and allowing him to take control of our lives.

Speaking of Jesus as King is something different for us in our democracy. We are used to electing our leaders and they are to be responsible to us. God is different. Jesus as our King is different. We did not elect him; he has elected us. We are not king, he is king over all the world and He is God. Our choice is whether or not we will serve Him.

The Shepherd, in the Bible, represents leaders of the people, both religious and political

5. First reading. How are we doing as shepherds and how are our shepherds doing (religious and political)? The prophet Ezekiel explained that the exile in Babylonia had been caused by infidelity and disloyalty to God on the part of the shepherds of the country, their kings and leaders. In this passage, Ezekiel foreshadows the coming of Christ when he prophesied that God would eliminate these unfaithful shepherds of His People, Israel, and would Himself become Israel's Shepherd, leading, feeding, healing and protecting His sheep. God is very critical of evil shepherds: see Ezek 34:1-10, Jer 23:1-2, John 10:1-21. (For a profound reflection on the importance of godly leadership, read all of these passages at one setting). Note that the designation “shepherd” applies to all who exercise leadership role in the Church.

The goal of our lives is to gain the blessing of heaven, with the sheep.

As Jesus was raised from the dead, so we hope to be raised to new life with Him

6. Second Reading: How are we doing in our faith, especially in understanding the resurrection (and all things supernatural)? How well do we understand this? I recommend reading all of 1 Cor 15 on the Resurrection. Example of our receiving our “essential” body in the afterlife. Example from “Heaven is for real.” Example of Vietnam War amputee having both legs when in “Out of Body” experience. See also my summary study sheet, “Evidences for the Supernatural.”

7. Gospel: Kingship of Jesus the Messiah in the Bible. Here Jesus explains what is necessary to be saved. To be saved, and to be saved by faith in Him, we must serve others in need. Jesus is presented to

us now, not only as our good shepherd leading, feeding and healing his sheep, but also as dwelling in those for whom we care. In the parable of the separation of sheep from goats in the Last Judgment, every person to whom we give ourselves, "whether hungry, thirsty or a stranger, naked, sick or in prison," is revealed to us as having been the risen Jesus. Here is an opportunity to evaluate the maturity of our faith in how we are serving others. Our reward or punishment will depend on how we have treated this risen Jesus in the needy.

11. Saint Mother Theresa was called to serve, these the "least of the brethren of Jesus." But here understanding went deeper. She explains that they are, "hungry, not only for bread, but hungry for love; naked not only for clothing, but for human dignity and respect; homeless not only for want of a room of bricks, but homeless because of rejection. This is Christ in "distressing disguise." Jesus lives within these hurting people, behind their eyes, their tears, and their pain. All our religious practices in the Church are meant to make us truly compassionate toward them all and so eligible to be rewarded on the day of the Last Judgment by our king and Lord, Jesus Christ, Whom we have thus helped.

8. A unique king with a unique kingdom: Jesus Christ lives as king, from heaven above. His citizens are called to obey the moral laws of God, best summed up in the love of God and neighbor. The preface in today's Mass describes Jesus' kingdom as "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace."

9. We need to be prepared to answer "Yes" to the king's six questions: In the Gospel reading, Jesus reminds us to get ready to answer "yes" to his six questions based on our corporal and spiritual acts of charity. "*I was hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, sick, imprisoned; did you help Me?*" When God threatens us with punishment, or the withholding of rewards, it is His way of motivating us to do what He wants us to do, just as mature parents have always done (See CCC 1828 for three levels of motivation for obeying God: fear, reward, love of Him).

10. This is a means of evaluating our faith. James tells us "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also, faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." This ties in exactly with the vision of the Last Judgment. Martin Luther wanted to eliminate the Book of James from the Bible because of its insistence on works. But we can see that it fits perfectly with Jesus's understanding of faith. We are reminded that when we care for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned, we are actually living out our faith and taking care of Jesus who lives behind the faces of these people.

12. The fight against the enemies of Christ's kingdom: There are enemies of Christ who attack us on a personal level as well as on a national or political level. The enemies of Christ's kingdom attack our families by making the evils of abortion, divorce, same-sex marriage, cohabitation, and all kinds of greedy exploitation seem "normal" and palatable by means of provocative television shows, movies, Internet sites, dance, dress, speech and music. The whole of this campaign is designed and intended to eradicate any recognition of Jesus Christ as our King and Lord. This evil has infiltrated even the ordained ranks of the Catholic Church as evidenced by the scandals of clergy sex abuse cases. Hence, Jesus the King needs convinced apostles prepared and ready to fight against the enemy. The battlefield is the home, the school, the place of employment, the neighborhood, the parish, our nation and the world as a whole.

Long live Christ the King! In the 1920s, a totalitarian, secularist regime gained control of Mexico and tried to suppress the Church. To resist the regime, many Christians took up the cry, "*Viva Cristo Rey!*" ["Long live Christ the King!"] They called themselves "Cristeros." The most famous Cristero was a young Jesuit priest named Padre Miguel Pro. Using various disguises, Padre Pro ministered to the people of Mexico City. Finally, the government arrested him and sentenced him to public execution on November 23, 1927. The president of Mexico (Plutarco Calles) thought that Padre Pro would beg for mercy, so he invited the press to the execution. Padre Pro did not plead for his life, but instead knelt holding a crucifix.

When he finished his prayer, he kissed the crucifix and stood up. Holding the crucifix in his right hand, he extended his arms and shouted, "*Viva Cristo Rey!*" At that moment the soldiers fired. The journalists took pictures; if you look up "Padre Pro" or "Saint Miguel Pro" on the Internet, you can see that picture.

13. We need to reaffirm our commitment to serving Christ our King. We cannot serve Christ and other masters. Let us conclude the Church year by asking the Lord to help us serve the King of Kings to the best of our abilities in every aspect of our lives. *Christus vincit! Christus regnat! Christus imperat!* Christ conquers! Christ rules! Christ reigns! God bless you.

Here is part of the text of the Encyclical that Pope Pius XI used to promulgate the Feast of Christ the King in 1925 to confront major dangers facing the world.

"If to Christ our Lord is given all power in heaven and on earth; if all men, purchased by his precious blood, are by a new right subjected to his dominion; if this power embraces all men, it must be clear that not one of our faculties is exempt from his empire. He must reign in our minds, which should assent with perfect submission and firm belief to revealed truths and to the doctrines of Christ. He must reign in our wills, which should obey the laws and precepts of God. He must reign in our hearts, which should spurn natural desires and love God above all things, and cleave to him alone. He must reign in our bodies and in our members, which should serve as instruments for the interior sanctification of our souls, or to use the words of the Apostle Paul, as instruments of justice unto God." [\[1\]](#)

14. Personal examination of conscience of the past year and resolutions for the next. Let us today renew our allegiance and faithfulness to Christ our King. Let us evaluate our life of faith over the past year and plan out how better to serve Jesus in the year to come. Given our baptism into Christ and the fact that we are indeed the blessed sons and daughters of the King, let us rely on his strength to move ahead.

Old Testament: The books of Samuel, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah represent Christ the Messiah as a king. Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the Prophet Micah announced His coming as king. "*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrata, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days*"(5:1). Daniel (7: 13-14), presents Christ as "*one coming like a human being ... to him was given dominion and glory and kingship that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.*"

New Testament: The magi from the Far East came to Jerusalem and asked the question: (Mt. 2:2) "*Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star... and we have come to worship him.*" During the royal reception given to Jesus on Palm Sunday, the Jews shouted: (Lk.19: 38) "*Hosanna to the king, who comes in the name of the Lord.*" When Pilate asked the question: (Jn.18: 37) "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus made his assertion, "*You say that I am a king,*" then went on, "*For this I was born and came into this world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to My voice.*" Jesus (Luke 23: 42-43), promised paradise to the repentant thief on the cross, who made the request: "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*" Before his ascension into heaven, Jesus declared: (Mt. 28:18) "*I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.*" Today's gospel on the Last Judgment presents Christ the King coming in his heavenly glory to judge us. This stresses Jesus's **authority.**

2. This Sunday as an opportunity for yearly review and preparation for resolutions for next year. As the climax and ending of the liturgical year, this theme also presents us with an opportunity to examine our faith, our hope and our love; to see how well we have developed during this past year, and to set goals

(make resolutions) for our growth in our Christian life during the upcoming year. I encourage you to use the season of Advent as a time of strategizing your goals (resolutions) for the coming year.