

## Homily of Thirty-Fourth Sunday, Christ the King of Year A, 2023

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; Psalm 23:1-3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28; Matthew 25:31-46

The feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925, not long after the end of the First World War. The pope established the feast as a statement of faith against the prevailing ideologies of communism and secularism at that time. The two ideologies attempted to exclude faith, religion, and God from humanity. This feast is even more relevant to us now that we face many anti-Christian and anti-Catholic ideologies like secularism, materialism, relativism, anti-clericalism, and persecution of Christians.

In her speech in June 2023, Laura Aboli captures partly the humanity's decadence and gradual disintegration:

*“They destabilize, dehumanize, and demoralize humanity through every means possible: the destruction of the nuclear family, children being indoctrinated by the state, abortion, the eradication of God and spirituality from education, life in megacities and away from nature, toxic food, air and water, social media replacing real human connection and interaction, engineered financial crisis, taxation, endless wars and massive migration, stress, anxiety, depression, drugs and alcohol, constant fear-mongering, moral relativism as the new religion. ... Humanity has been influenced and forced to move away from all the things that give us strength, security, purpose, and meaning.”*

By celebrating this feast, we are upholding the teachings of the Scripture, the teachings of the Church, and to continue to proclaim Jesus Christ as our leader and king.

The kingship of Jesus is clearly stated in the Scripture: The King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15); the ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). Jesus declared in Matthew 28:18, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” In Philippians 2:9-10, St. Paul writes, “God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...”

Jesus' disciples who thought that Jesus' kingdom was political asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). The Pharisees, also, asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus' reply gives us a good understanding of his kingship we are celebrating today: “The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, ‘Look, here it is,’ or, ‘There it is.’ For behold, the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke (17:21). This means that the universal kingdom is within us, around us, and among us; in our homes, our parishes, our churches, our neighborhoods, our institutions, our work places, our business places, our market places, our gatherings, our communities, our environments, and so on. The kingship of Jesus, also, lies in the fact that Christianity has spread to every corner of the world and has influenced every aspect of world development and history.

The first reading is Ezekiel's prophecy of Jesus' universal kingship. He came to the cloudy and dark world to die in order to save the scattered sheep. He came to seek out and bring back the strayed, to bind up the injured, to heal the sick. Jesus is no longer physically with us; but by his Spirit, Word, and the Sacraments, he empowers us, his followers, to continue his saving works. We are kingly people (1 Peter 2:9); we are co-heirs of the kingdom with him (Romans 8:17); we are to reign with him (2 Timothy 2:11); and we are co-workers in God's service (1 Corinthians 3:9). We are the children of the kingdom pronounced in the preface of today's Eucharistic celebration as “... an eternal and universal kingdom: a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace.” It is by our position in his kingdom that we are able to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and care for the sick and prisoners, as demanded of us in today's gospel.

Our responsibilities are enormous in our world full of corruption, afflictions, violence, and anti-Christian ideologies. Jesus reminds us, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force” (Matthew 11:12). St. Paul challenges us to cast away the spirit of cowardice (2 Timothy 1:7).

How can Jesus become the king of my life?

1. To love him above everything else and prefer him above everything else.
2. To be in intimate communion with him in prayer and worship.
3. To know him by having his word dwell richly in me.
4. To be loyal and obedient to him by letting his word become a lamp to my path and a light to my feet.
5. To witness him to humanity honestly and wholeheartedly.
6. To trust completely in his divine will and depend solely on his divine providence.
7. To have holy fear of him by having a humble contrite heart and by being repulsive to sin.

**Fr. Martin Eke, MSP**