

Homily of Thirty-Fourth Sunday (Christ the King) of Year B, 2024

Daniel 7:13-14; Psalm 93:1-2,5; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18:33-37

This Sunday is the last Sunday of the Church's year. Next Sunday begins the Advent Season.

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 and all manner of opposition to Christianity and persecution of Christians. By celebrating this feast, we are upholding the teachings of the Scripture and the teachings of the Church; and continue to proclaim Jesus Christ as our leader and king.

Today's second reading testifies the kingship of Jesus: "... the ruler of the kings of the earth ... the Alpha and the Omega, ... the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty" (Revelation 1:5-8).

Jesus' disciples never understood his kingship. On Jesus' last day with them, they still asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). In today's gospel, Jesus declares that his kingdom does not belong to this world (John 18:36). Jesus is not a political king but a spiritual king.

Although Jesus is a spiritual king, Christianity has a universal influence on world's civilization, discoveries, philosophy, theology, geography, history, literature, science, medicine, and development more than any religion. The birth of Jesus brought about the categorization of world history to "Before Christ" (BC) and *Anno Domini* (AD) meaning, "In the year of the Lord" or "After Christ." From a few followers in Judea, Christianity has spread to every part of the world. Out of the world's population of 8.1 billion in 2024, the Christians' population is 2.4 billion, one-third of the world's population and the world's largest religion. This is a fulfillment of Daniel prophecy in the first reading, "He received dominion, splendor, and kingship; all nations, peoples and tongues will serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, his kingship, one that shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14). As Zechariah (9:10) prophesies, "His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth." We are not surprised, therefore, why the Catholic Church is in the remotest corners of the world.

The kingship of Jesus is a model for rulers and leaders. Zechariah prophesies (9:9), "Behold: your king is coming to you, a just savior is he, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Jesus says, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matthew 11:29). His kingship is in his compassionate heart. He did most of his miracles out of compassion. His kinship is in his laying down his life for us (1 John 3:16). Compare Jesus' kingship with that of our rulers and leaders! Do Christian rulers and leaders make any difference? Compare Jesus' kingship with how we

make our authority felt in our various responsibilities! Are we just? Are we gentle and humble? Are we compassionate? Do we make sacrifices? Do we lay down our lives?

Christianity is under attack from those who propagate or impose or enforce anti-Christian and anti-Catholic ideologies and policies. The effects of these attacks and pressures can be seen in the reduced number of churchgoers and the number of practicing Christians. We are aware of the closure of Catholic schools and churches. There is also so much persecution of Christians in many parts of the world. However, our faith rests on Jesus' words that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus says in Luke 12:49, "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing. If Christians have the same level of passion seen in the entertainment world, business world, sports, science, technology, and so on, the earth would be on fire with the Good News!

Jesus is our King; therefore, we are children of the Kingdom. Jesus confers the authority of his spiritual kingship upon us by proclaiming in Mark 16:17-18, "These signs will accompany those who believe in my name: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

It is with this spiritual authority that we can witness Jesus to the world. Jesus can only rule the universe through us if we take up this authority and use it. It is with this authority that we preach the Good News, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit prisoners, and drive out demons.

Very importantly, through the celebration of today's feast, we pray that may allow Jesus Christ to rule and reign over our hearts, our lives, homes, church, businesses, work places, environments, communities, our country, and our world. We pray that we become true children of his kingdom and his ambassadors who are empowered by the kingship authority he confers on us. We pray for the rekindling of Jesus' Spirit and fire in us so that we may blaze and set the earth on fire with the Good News. Amen.

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