

Feast Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

November 20, 2022

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

Today we are celebrating the *Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe*. It seems only a few short weeks ago since we were here preparing to end the 2021 liturgical year and begin the journey into Advent. Here some may ask, what makes this day more special than any other day of the year?

For those who may not remember, briefly stated solemnities and feast days were set aside by the historical church to draw our attention to specific events in the life of Christ and bring emphasis to important traditions and tenants of the Christian faith.

Therefore, it is fitting that as we complete another sacred liturgical year, we commemorate the occasion with a special celebratory day to honor our King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although a relatively new feast day in the history of the Western Church the *Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King* was initiated by Pope Pius XI in 1925 with these thoughts in mind:

1. That nations would see that the Church has the right to freedom, and immunity from the state.
2. That leaders and nations would see that they are bound to give respect to Christ.

3. That the faithful would gain strength and courage from the celebration of the feast, as we are reminded that Christ must reign in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies.¹

If you recall your history lessons, you may remember that World War I was the war that was supposed to end all wars. As we now know WWI did not accomplish its goal and so drawing upon the tradition of the historical church, Pious XI did his part in promoting world peace by proclaiming a Solemnity in 1925 to remind the world that indeed Jesus Christ is our only hope and rightful King and authority.

However, many people living in Free World Countries, and especially Americans are not used to being subject to the authority of a king. We relish our independence, which some then use to challenge established tradition and promote anti-biblical philosophies that serve their own needs and secure decisional power. Unfortunately, more and more church leaders appear to be following their example favoring a majority ruling in lieu of following the King of the Universe.

Therefore, before we turn to the Scripture, I think it would be prudent to mention that the Church is being assaulted with questions concerning its authority along with her biblical and traditional principles. There are those who demand that popular opinion rather than the Holy Spirit, Sacred Scripture, and Tradition ought to inspire and lead the Church.

We mentioned a few weeks ago how a Jewish family was tortured when their adversaries tried to force them to renounce their faith.

¹ <http://www.aquinasandmore.com/catholic-articles/christ-the-king-sunday/article/205/sort/relevance/productsperpage/12/layout/grid/currentpage/1/keywords/christ%20the%20king>

Some would insist that history is beginning to repeat itself with new definitions of words, laws, regulations, rules, and statutes leading to conflicting ideologies.

An example might be how some people want to interpret the Constitution's First Amendment as prohibiting people of faith from influencing our nation's government. On the contrary, the Constitutional framers wrote that the First Amendment prohibits the government from interfering with the affairs of the Church. The government shall not institute a governmental church, and nothing about people of faith not influencing government. Yet ask around and you will often hear the opposite.

But less we digress too far, allow me to say that I am not at all antagonistic towards those who challenge historical faith truths. What they choose to believe or disbelieve is solely up to them if they do not force their will upon others. My opinion is, if you don't agree with the lens of historical Tradition, then form your own organization. I don't mean to sound harsh, but I don't know how else to say it, but stop trying to force your opinions on others.

With that presupposition/assumption, I believe it is important to understand the amazing historical and spiritual heritage we in the Old Catholic Tradition possess, indeed a rich heritage stemming from early Judaism, the Early Church Fathers and the best of theology and traditions from both Eastern and Western Christianity. Furthermore, to be able to humbly share our blessings with others is truly an honor and a sacred privilege.

So back to the Solemnities, like the Jewish people in the OT, faith groups adhering to Catholic tradition follow the liturgical year with several corporately observed special solemnities and holy

days. We differ from Judaism by including the seasons of Advent and Lent, and the extended seasons of Easter and Christmas.

As mentioned before, these days and seasons are set aside by the historical church to celebrate and liturgically participate in the key events and life of the redemption story. However, there is really a whole lot more theology involved here than meets the eye.

Time prohibits a more detailed explanation regarding catholic spirituality and liturgical sacramental worship; but for now, I would like to have us think about the liturgical year, the lectionary readings and the retelling of God's redemptive story in terms of a spiritual theatrical drama or play. God's story or His-story is presented in the form of a divine comedy. In thespian terms plays are either written as a comedy or a tragedy. In a comedy the hero wins, whereas in a tragedy the villain wins.

Catholic spirituality insists that the worshiper fully participate in the mystery of this Divine Drama as if they were present and fully experiencing the event celebrated. In other words, when a person joins in worship with a historically Catholic church they are liturgically and mystically invited to enter a different world so to speak; hence, the worshiper's piety, or devotion and reverence for God plays an important part in this transformational encounter.

So, as we delve even deeper into the mystery of the *Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe* we soon realize just how different our King is from other worldly kings and rulers. In this case Pious XI was referring to the world leaders who orchestrated WWI and its reign of death and destruction.

In comparison to other worldly kings and rulers, our King, the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates His love for people by sincerely showering His grace on those who are willing to follow him.

Now concerning the OT Scripture readings, the readings set the stage for today's dramatic Solemnity presentation. It is not always easy to imagine how and for what purpose the ancient biblical scholars understood King David to be a type of the future Messiah.

As a supporting character in the salvation drama, king David was purposed to have a major role in revealing God's grace and mercy to the Jewish nation by shepherding God's flock, and thereby rightly representing Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Even though he may have failed in many ways, the earthly kingdom of king David still foreshadowed the forthcoming eternal monarchy of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Thus, the Gospel reading this morning draws our attention back to the little handwritten sign nailed slightly above the head of a severely beaten and crucified man hanging on a wooden post. Hence the sign brings us right up to the climax of the story drama as it reads, "This is the King of the Jews."

From a thespian's point of view, up to this point it looks like the hero of the drama - Jesus will be defeated, and the Church represented by the damsel in distress will remain in the clutches of the evil protagonist villain Satan.

Subsequently you and I are left to make a very important – in the now - personal decision. What will we do concerning the crucified one? Will we put our trust in Him to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, or will we succumb to our fallen natural

instincts and follow only what we can see with our eyes and understand with our logical, rational, and reasonable minds?

The religious rulers of Jesus' time were more than a little upset regarding what Pilate wrote on the cross. What they wanted written was, "He *said* [emphasis mine] he was the King of the Jews;" to which Pilate severely reprimanded them saying, "What I have written I have written."

So here we are faced with a present dilemma. The religious leaders would not accept Jesus as their King. Putting yourself in their positional role, what would you have chosen to write on the sign? All points considered; it makes for a very hard decision indeed. Without the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit, who knows what we might have believed. Hence, the importance of St Paul's theological proclamation to the Colossian Messianic believers.

Following Jesus' resurrection and ascension we notice that St Paul's testimony turns to the last part of the divine drama. Actors call this part of the drama the falling action, the time between the climax of the play and the final scenes. For example do you remember William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson in the film *Braveheart*, remember when he gave his stirring speech encouraging his fellow Scots to fight hard against the English crown's tyranny?

Well in the same theatric manner, and to influence people to choose the good while there is still time before the final curtain is drawn, St Paul urged all the faithful followers of Jesus to proclaim that He is,

- the image of the invisible God
- the creator of all things, visible or invisible
- the one who was before all things
- the one who holds all things together
- the head of the body the church
- the beginning, the firstborn from the dead
- the one in whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

So then even though our hero Redeemer King has triumphed over death – St Paul reminds us that we need to remain diligent because the battle between good and evil continues. However, the good news is that we also know who wins. Someday soon the Son of God will once again return center stage to rescue His Bride.

Hence the last book of the Bible, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* depicts the glorious return of Christ to this earth. In this final act all creation will become subject to Him, evil will be forever dispelled, thus leaving the King and His Bride to forever live together in eternal happiness.

So, I hope we can understand how today's Solemnity allows us to once again slow down, center our hearts, and remain mindful of our Hero Christ King in preparation for making His way back to the limelight where He will once again take center stage as *King of the Universe*.

Meanwhile as we await His return, let us make the most of our time together by humbly celebrating in the Eucharist to return our hearts and minds to the forthcoming Incarnation celebration.

Jesus said unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part in me.

He also made it very clear that as often as we participate in this sacred drama, we proclaim the eternal Passover covenant sealed in His death's blood and ratified by His resurrection.

Indeed think about it, the forgiveness of sin, the healing of body, soul and spirit, peace in your heart, and the promise of eternal life with Christ Jesus our Redeemer; what more could we ask for. So do not hesitate to respond to the invitation to humbly serve with the King, pick up your cross – receive Him today, and then go forth in newfound joy to love and serve Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

In the name of the Father