

Living the Spirit Christ is King

This Sunday we will come to the last Sunday in Ordinary Time. Liturgically it is the feast of Christ the King. This feast has a history. In an encyclical of December 1, 1925 Pope Pius XI wrote a refutation of what we call secularism. He warned about and even condemned the dangers connected with the belief that persons and peoples should organize their lives and the life of nations as if there were no God. He said clearly that this arrangement of society ends up with ruin. In place of the love of God and neighbor it substitutes pride and egoism, begets jealousy between individuals and hatred between classes and rivalry between nations. Sadly his prediction proved quite true.

For good reason he desired to have a feast that would emphasize the role of God, and especially of Jesus the savior of mankind, in the affairs of our worldly life. He insisted that Jesus as King has the right to receive from us the obedience of love in our personal and public lives.

In the Old Testament God was properly seen as the king or leader of the chosen people. To call God a king simply followed the custom of those earliest of times, when leaders of nations or peoples were so called. In time Israel adopted royal display to apply to its God. At the same time it did not make of Him a political figure. In time also a human king was chosen to represent God and to reign as his servant and image among them. Think here of Saul and David and Solomon.

The prophets of the Old Testament looked to the future and made promises of a future time when Israel would have a special king. Isaiah hailed his birth as the gift of God to his people; bringing peace, joy, victory and justice. The people of God settled down for long ages awaiting the fulfillment of the promise. The New Testament gives us the message of how Jesus fulfilled that promise.

Jesus was not a king in the earthly sense. Yet it is interesting that some saw him as such. We read how Jesus stole away when people wanted to make him king after the multiplication of the loaves. People would salute him as such in an entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. And then who can ignore that over the Cross of Christ was written Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!

How are we to apply this teaching to our lives today? I am sure that Pope Pius XI saw into a future that soon enough followed upon his writing. He warned of society so secular as to be without God. History gives us the story of Nazism, Fascism and Communism. All of these were evil because God was absent from their ideology.

We must not think that because our Constitutional form of government has protected us from those arrangements of society, that we will always be so protected. There is a growing movement to oust God from public life. This may be done as some misguided form of tolerance for all religious belief, but it is far more dangerous. We see how even little ways are used to bring about a godless society among us. The cross erected to honor fallen veterans is attacked as divisive. We have the onslaught of the present government

that would make Catholics abide by government interpretation of what is religion. Conscience is being ignored. Political fervor easily falls into the trap of mediocrity. From that comes the downfall of any society.

To strengthen our faith we are urged to revisit the Scriptures and then to look to Tradition, the official teachings of the Church. Let me mention here some few verses of Scripture that are worth reflection.

Asked by Pilate if he was a king, Jesus replied, "Do you say this of yourself or have others told you of it about me?" He said further: "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence." Pilate then asked again if he was a king. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this was I born and for this I came into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice."

When I read this I think of how there is so much more to God's dominion than the confines of our world. There is in a sense an invisible world where He is surely king and ruler. The example of Princess Diana comes to mind, when she said she would call herself the princess of peoples' hearts. In a way we should all recognize Jesus as king of our heart. His rule is gentle -- he says as much, that his yoke is sweet and his burden light. The command given us is to love God entirely and then to love our neighbor.

In His teaching Jesus describes His kingdom, which we call the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist had cried out that "the kingdom of God is at hand." This was the good news he brought to the people of his time. For us the message is still a valid one. At some time in some way that kingdom will be a reality for us.

The *Biblical Theology* manual that I have had over the years as a good companion to my thought says this: "The kingdom of God is a mysterious reality whose nature only Jesus can make known. He reveals it to the humble and the small, not the wise and the prudent of this world... After the resurrection this teaching will be completed and the action of the Holy Spirit will terminate it." "The faithful will receive the inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God; the disciples of Jesus will share the glory of this kingdom."

As we celebrate this liturgical feast we should pray the Lord to subject all nations to his gentle rule. We pray that all nations may live in peace, with the peace that only God can give. For our own nation we must not only pray. We must be active in this continuing fight to preserve in full measure the freedom of religion guaranteed us. To do this means to enlighten our legislators, perhaps even our president, as to what is the real meaning of our desire to have the full protection of our laws. Let us, moreover, not be deceived by slight of hand political tricks. They are useful during political campaigns. Afterward, even now, they are dangerous to our freedom.

God love and bless you always!

Monsignor David Morrison

This is renewed from a previous year. I hope it is worthy of your thought.