

Feast of Christ the King

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My dear friends: This Liturgical year began on the First Sunday of Advent, and it ends today with the Feast of Christ the King. During the Liturgical year, we re-live the life of Christ and try to immerse ourselves in the kingdom he came to establish. It is right, therefore, to ask yourselves at this end of the year: "Is Christ more king of my life now than a year ago?"

Kings today are an unfamiliar breed. The few that are left have no political power. But, in ancient times, kings were sacred and absolute. They were crowned at their coronation with a special consecration and anointing. And the ancient king set the tone and spirit of his realm. A good king made for a prosperous and orderly kingdom.



That idea is by no means dead today. The influence of a leader is still a powerful factor in modern life. For example, take education. A school takes its spirit from the principal. Does he or she love and respect children? The staff will reflect that spirit in the classrooms.

Take business: Is the owner or manager an honest man or a crook? His employees will be quick to follow his ways.

Take government: Are the leaders people of integrity, dedicated to the good of their country, or are they unscrupulous and on the make? Their kind of government will filter down through the bureaucracy.

The same is true of Christ the leader of the worldwide Christian community. His spirit must be the spirit of the people of his kingdom.

The phrase "The kingdom of God" must have been often on the lips of Jesus. St. Luke mentions it 24 times in his Gospel; St. Matthew 39 times.

Jesus never defined the Kingdom but he described it in parables. In Chapter 13 of his Gospel, St. Matthew gathered 7 parables each beginning with "the Kingdom of God is like. . ." " . . . like a pearl of great price," " . . . like yeast hidden in the dough."

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come . . ." immediately followed by "Thy will be done." We know the semitic style of parallelism one sentence explaining or expanding another. And so, the definition of the Kingdom is "a community of people who do God's will on earth as perfectly as it is done in heaven."

From what Jesus said about His Father's kingdom, some interesting facts emerge:

1. It is an eternal Kingdom. It existed in THE PAST. Jesus warned the Pharisees: "There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out." [LK 13;20]

It exists in THE PRESENT. He said: "The Kingdom of God is among you."

It exists in THE FUTURE. The good thief said: "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." [LK 23;42]

2. It is a universal kingdom; not territorial or national, but worldwide. Jesus said: "People will come from the east and the west from north and south to sit at table in the kingdom of God." [LK 12;30]
3. It certainly is not a political kingdom. Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world." (Jn. 18;36)
4. It is a hidden kingdom. Jesus said: "The kingdom of God is like yeast which a woman took and kneaded into 3 measures of flour." [pMT. 13;33] The Vatican Council puts it this way:

"The Kingdom of God is already present in mystery. When the Lord appears, it will be brought to full flower. Then Christ will hand over to the Father a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, love and peace." [Ch. In Mod. World, #39]

That is the Kingdom of God in its final perfect form. But what do you see when you look around today? Do you not see another king and another kingdom at work?

The kingdom of God is opposed by the kingdom of Satan. The values of Christ's kingdom are aggressively attacked by the value of Satan's kingdom.

Let me try to illustrate this in concrete terms. Take the example of a girl I will call Maria. Maria is an adolescent between 14 and 16. She is changing from a docile child to an independent adult. She is ceasing to take herself and her parents, and her world for granted, and is looking around with an enquiring mind.

And she sees two kinds of life around her; two sets of values offered her; two leaders Christ and Satan competing for her loyalty. And what are those leaders offering Maria?

CHRIST offers a kingdom of justice and peace and love. He makes high demands on Maria: faith in God, self-denial and obedience to Himself, unselfish dedication to neighbor. But he promises great rewards: "A hundred fold in this present time and in the world to come, life everlasting." [Mt. 19;29]

SATAN demands little of Maria, panders to her worst instincts, and says nothing about the future. Rather, he says to Maria as he said to Jesus: "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world with their glory and power if, falling down, you will adore me." [Lk. 4;5f]

Christ offers a kingdom of life. Maria hears God speaking in the words of Moses: "I place before you life and prosperity, death and doom. Choose life then." [Deut. 30:19] Satan's kingdom invites to death murders, abortions, teenage suicides, bombings.

There is a kingdom of life and a kingdom of death, and Maria must choose into which she will enroll.

Christ offers a kingdom of truth. Satan solicits Maria by a kingdom of lies and half-truths. In governments she senses a credibility gap; in business she sees truth distorted by advertising the credit card claiming to bring with it the "good life."

She soon learns the expression "Let the buyer beware" so old that the Romans had a word for it, Caveat Emptor, and probably the Persians and the Neanderthals.

Will Maria enroll herself in the kingdom of Christ and truth, or the kingdom of Satan whom Jesus called "a liar and the father of lies"?

Christ says: "Take up your cross daily and follow me." Satan says, "If it feels good, do it."

My dear friends let me conclude:

We seldom face great challenges to our loyalty to Christ the King. Most moral decisions seem insignificant and without consequences at the time.

- to be angry in traffic;
- or patient under provocation;
- to steal small stuff;
- to cheat on an exam;
- to take a paper off the Internet.

But as time goes on, a pattern emerges. The little decisions set the stage for the big ones. I remind you of the old saying:

Sow a thought and reap an act;
Sow an act and reap a habit;
Sow a habit and reap a destiny.

Hence the call of Christ the King is for each of us for constant conversion. "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."

To do this is astonishingly easy WATCH THE LITTLE THINGS.

And so, after another year of following Christ, I conclude with the question I began with: "Is Christ more king of my life today than a year ago?"

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