

# Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

## Homily by

### Deacon Jim Olshefski

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I love history; I love the study of history! Not just the dates, facts and figures of historical events, but the "why" of those events which have shaped the world to where we are today. Last week after Mass, I met with a parishioner with whom, I discovered, I share a particular interest in Civil War history. We shared our thoughts, **at length**, on one the most tumultuous and formative periods in our nation's history. Did I mention that I love history?!!

With that background, as I began to ponder the readings on the Solemnity of Christ the King, I asked myself the question that any self-respecting 3-year old would ask: WHY? What is the origin of this holy day that we celebrate every year on the last weekend of our liturgical year? What I discovered fascinated me and I will now share that history with you:

During the early twentieth century, numerous atheistic governments formed in countries throughout the world: Mexico, Russia, and Portugal, to name just a few. These regimes threatened, not only the Catholic Church and its faithful, but civilization itself.

Just to our south, our Mexican brothers and sisters, who were persecuted by the government, fought for their religious freedom in what is known as the Cristero War. You may have seen the movie "For Greater Glory," starring Andy Garcia and Eva Longoria, in which the persecution of the faithful was portrayed. Many of those faithful, including 14-year old Saint Jose Sanchez del Rio, went to their deaths with the words "Viva Christo Rey," in English "Long live Christ the King!"

Against this backdrop of the increasing world-wide secularization and out-right hostility toward and persecution of the Church, in 1925 Pope Pius XI instituted the Feast of Christ the King with the issuance of his encyclical *Quas Primas* in which he responded to this growing secularization of society. He recognized that trying to "thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law" out of the public sphere would result in continuing discord among peoples and nations. Pope Pius's encyclical gave Catholics hope and assurance that, while civil governments come and go, Christ the King will reign forever. Pius said that Christ "reigns in the hearts of men, both by reason of the keenness of his intellect and the extent of his knowledge, and also because **he is very truth**, and it is from [Christ the King] that truth must be obediently received by all mankind."

Today in 2018, we again experience the increased secularization of society where some have transformed the constitutional concept of "freedom **of** religion" to "freedom **from** religion." Moreover, the Church faces pressures from without and crisis from within. In addition to the challenges that Christians in a secular society must confront, the faithful must also tend to wounds inflicted on the Church by priests and bishops who either committed acts of sexual abuse themselves or failed to respond to abuse with justice for the victims. By failing in so many instances to adequately address the sexual abuse that proliferated in the Church, and to face the sinfulness within the Church squarely and honestly, the Church has drained herself of the power she now needs so desperately, that is, the power of holiness.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells Pilate that "everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." And you may ask, just as Pilate did, what is "truth?" Truth is God the Father's love for every creature, love that Christ the King demonstrates with his Passover—His life, death and resurrection (which, by the way, is so beautifully portrayed in the stained-glass window above the confessional on the west side of our Cathedral). The humble service and total sacrifice of Christ the King is the **truth** that makes us holy; that rescues humanity from itself and restores the dignity of the human race.

This day, the Solemnity of Christ the King, is a day for all of us to rededicate ourselves to the **truth** by listening to the voice of Christ and to recognize the reign of Christ by obeying his Word. It is only under the reign of Christ, our sovereign King, that we will see renewal in our Church and in our country.