

## Homily for November 25, 2018

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In ancient Egypt ... as every student of ancient history knows ... cats were once worshiped as deities. ... Today ... they have been downgraded to mere royalty and ... as any cat owner can testify ... they have never quite forgiven us. ... I say this at the risk of being accused of trivializing a great mystery of our faith, I hope I am not ... That is certainly not my intention ... but it does bring to mind a few observations about ... this **Kingship** of our Lord and Savior.

This Solemnity of Christ the King is somewhat ... ironic ... considering that Jesus spent most of His life rejecting the whole idea of being a king! When he fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, the people wanted to make him a king ... His response ... He hid! When Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world ... Jesus refused and rebuked him. And then, of course, there is also the fact that ... **King** ... is not a word we normally associate with someone born in a stable. Jesus did not live a very kingly life: He lived humbly and kept company with tax-collectors, sinners and prostitutes. And ... He certainly did not die a kingly death. By every human standard, the crucifixion seems a very un-kingly end ... to a very un-king-like life. If He is a King ... He certainly doesn't look like one. The leaders jeered at him. The soldiers mocked him. His closest followers abandoned Him. The bystanders joked about Jesus being a king. His painful and humiliating death was a grotesque and macabre public entertainment.

And yet ... we celebrate the Kingship of Christ. This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 ... recent ... in the long history of our Church. So why ... would he initiate this celebration of the Kingship of Christ ... of all things ... especially at a time when kingdoms and other monarchies were beginning to become irrelevant ... mere footnotes in history?

It was a time ... when people ... and indeed nations ... were adopting new social orders and new values ... rejecting Jesus and his law. Coming out of one of the worst wars in human history, the victors of this ... “war to **end** wars” ... had imposed harsh reparations on the vanquished ... planting seeds that would ensure that another war ... far worse ... would soon come. Anarchy, secularism and totalitarianism were the order of the day in a world where Communism reigned in Russia, Mussolini had become **Il Duce** in Italy and ... **Hitler** would soon rule in Germany. These regimes scoffed at the role of God and established the

principle that the **government** was the sole authority and ... that government ideology was the sole reference for people's lives and ... had the sole claim on their loyalty ... on their minds and hearts. Even the government of that **most** Catholic of countries ... Mexico ... would declare war on the Church ... and on God!

The pope explained: "With God excluded from political life ... human society is tottering to its fall, because it has no longer a secure and solid foundation." The idea of this feast ...then ... was to emphasize that **no** ruler ... **no** state ... **no** political party ... no matter how powerful ... has a claim on our hearts; only God ... only Jesus Christ is Lord of all. We were created for Him. He must come first in all areas of our lives and thus is ... for want of a better term ... King! The pope said, in essence: "No, the state is **not** the highest authority. God is!"

**But** ... that was then ... this is now! How relevant is this feast today? Nazism fell. Fascism fell in Italy and has faded in much of the world it once controlled. Communism failed in Russia and Eastern Europe. Thanks be to God, you and I do not live under such a regime. Unlike Mexico in the twenties (or the old Soviet Union or Nazi Germany) **we** enjoy religious freedom. ... **However** ... forty-five years ago ... in a decision welcomed by **many** as a great victory of freedom ... our government **usurped** the power to remove ... the God-given right to life itself ... from an entire class of its people ... the unborn. ... Eighteen years ago the state of Oregon assumed the power to license doctors to provide suicide drugs to the terminally ill. Additional states have followed suit. And in our "**War on Terror**" ... our government adopted a practice it had heretofore condemned in other nations ... the torture of prisoners.

No ... we do not live in a totalitarian country ... we are a free nation. In our Pledge of Allegiance we **still** state that we are a nation "**under God**." That phrase would seem to acknowledge that neither government or political parties are the ultimate authority over people's lives. **God** is! Americans say those words often ... but how many ... I wonder ... still believe them? The need for Christ's kingly rule is greater than ever, as we confront the evils of today and ... those evils tomorrow will bring. And when governments over-reach themselves ... as it seems governments must ... when they demand what we cannot in good conscience give; what **will** be our response? Yes, we must try to be good citizens, but ultimately ... we do **not** belong to governments. We do **not** belong to political parties. We belong to God ... **alone**. **Christ** is our king. In Mexico ... when the government began to persecute the church ... a Catholic people's army, the Cristeros, rose up against the

oppression: their battle cry was ***Viva Cristo Rey!*** Long Live Christ the King ... a battle cry as timely and crucial now as it was then. ... ***Viva ... Cristo Rey!***