

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe  
November 24, 2019  
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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*. By all accounts Jesus did *not* live a very kingly life: He lived humbly and kept company with tax-collectors, sinners and prostitutes. And ... as the Gospel points out ... He did not die a very kingly *death*. By every observable, measurable, 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 just a grotesque and macabre public *entertainment*.

And yet ... we celebrate the Kingship of Christ. The 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 Stalin reigned in Russia ... Mussolini had become "Il Duce" in Italy and Hitler was soon to be "*der Fuhrer*" in Germany. Those 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. Even China is becoming more like the west all the time! Thanks be to God you and I do not yet live under such a regime. Unlike Mexico in the twenties (or the old Soviet Union or Nazi Germany) we *still* enjoy religious freedom.

However ... forty-six years ago ... our government *did* ... usurp the power to *remove* ... the God-given right to life itself ... from an entire class of its people ... the unborn. This was *welcomed* by many as a victory of

**freedom**, and once our government crossed **that** line, it found the next step easier: to use taxpayers' money to pay for these procedures. Eighteen years ago the state of Oregon assumed the power to license doctors to provide **suicide** drugs to the terminally ill. Eight more 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. And now our country ... once a beacon of hope to the refugees of the world ... proposes that we welcome only those wealthy enough to be "self-sufficient" into our country.

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 the government is **not** the ultimate authority over people's lives. **God** is! Americans say those words every day ... but how many ... I wonder ... still believe them? The socio-political climate of the 1920's is **very** different than that of today, but 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 conscience give; what will be our response? Yes, we must **try** to be good citizens, but ultimately ... we do **not** belong to governments. 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!**