

Solemnity of Christ the King (A)
November 23, 2014.

How worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength and honour. To Him belong glory and power for ever and ever (Entrance Antiphon; Rv. 5:12; 1:6).

On this, the last Sunday of the liturgical year, we celebrate the great Feast of Christ the Universal King and contemplate Him as both the Good Shepherd and the Lord of history. *All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:32).* In Him, justice and mercy are not opposed in any way. In Him the words of the Psalm are fulfilled: *mercy and truth are met together (Ps. 85:10).* The parable of the last judgment is a bold and vivid statement of a truth that generally speaking we affirm less and less: there are consequences to our deeds. *Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Mt. 25:46).* The words of our Lord make it abundantly clear that universal salvation is not offered to everyone, regardless of one's ethical beliefs and practices or lack thereof. One often hears the question that putatively is meant to bring an end to all and any moral assessments: *Who am I to judge?* Sadly, this has become a thought terminating cliché on par with new words like *transphobia*, *homophobia* and *islamophobia*, to mention but a few; words that similarly cut off all rational consideration and yes, judgment of acts and actions that are violent, immoral and a detriment to one's eternal salvation.

The parable of the last judgment speaks to an understanding of the human condition or of humanity as having a teleologically ordered end; namely, eternal union with God, the author of all life. To recognise this truth and to live by it effectively means that one respects and reverences all human life because humans bear the divine image and no less because the Son of God shared this human nature in the Redemptive Incarnation. Hence our Lord says, *Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me (Mt. 25:40).* In this understanding of the human condition, it is clear that there are consequences to the manner in which we treat others, especially the least among us.

Conversely, an inconsequential view of reality posits that none of our choices or actions ultimately matter; that things and especially humans are nothing in themselves; but are only what we make them to be according to our wills and desires. This is a dystopian world where we choose our own genders, where we fashion our own truths, where *we* determine the worth of someone's life. This is a reality that lacks all judgment; certainly the Last Judgment but also personal judgment and discernment. Such a reality is chaotic and confused; subject if not to the tyranny of the strong over the weak, most certainly subject to the tyrannical rule of a self-will devoid of discernment. It is a world in which each one is his own king, his own god. This quickly devolves into a diabolically disordered and disoriented environment where each single thing can at once possess all value and importance in the immediate and yet no ultimate or enduring value.

It was in the midst of such moral chaos that has only intensified with time that today's Feast of Christ the King was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925 as an antidote to secularism, a way of life

which leaves God out of man's thinking and living and organizes his life as if God did not exist. Sadly, in our day, even for many who claim to believe in God, life is often lived as if God does not exist. It is what we might term a practical atheism. There are those who choose to identify themselves as *liberal* and who perhaps fail to realise that liberalism maintains that man is not subject to God or morally bound to obey His laws – natural or supernatural. Similarly naturalism seeks to eliminate God and His sovereignty over nature. Today's Feast proclaims our Lord's sovereignty over individuals, families, society, governments, and nations. In the encyclical establishing the Feast, Pope Pius observed that the *manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs* (*Quas primas*, 1, December 11, 1925). The nearly ninety years that have passed since these words were written have witnessed a second world war, countless conflicts, genocides and in our own times the threat of another war, the scourge of terrorism and a new tyranny which Pope Benedict described as a dictatorship of relativism; which does not recognise anything as certain or true and has as its highest goal one's ego and one's own desires. Against all of this, the remedy is still the same: the social kingship of Christ and submission to the rule of Christ, our Saviour.

The Tabernacle of our church is the throne of Christ our Eucharistic Lord and King. In the reception of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood and in our own prayer of adoration in His Eucharistic Presence we already experience a judgment. Here in His Presence *mercy and truth are met together* (*Ps.* 85:10) for the Good Shepherd nourishes us with His Body and Blood and in so doing the truth of who we are is affirmed; for we *have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory* (*Eph.* 1:12). If we make time to pray in His presence we will receive the grace to know what is most important in life; that which is most true. In the reality of this truth, the truth of Christ, we will recognise ourselves and we will come to know and to believe that our own lives are only really meaningful insofar as they are authentically Eucharistic and ordered towards our union with Christ in glory. The self-giving love that the Eucharist makes present is the only hope for our world. And this same love is what enables us to be loving in a way that encompasses everyone and everything in a manner that is ordered to the ultimate purpose of all that exists *so that God may be all in all* (*1 Cor.* 15:28). *How worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength and honour. To Him belong glory and power for ever and ever* (*Entrance Antiphon; Rv.* 5:12; 1:6).