

## ***Solemnity of Christ the Universal King (B)***

**November 22, 2015.** *For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice (Jn. 18:37).*

On this the last Sunday of the liturgical year, we celebrate the great Feast of Christ the Universal King and though we contemplate Christ our King bound before Pilate, we who listen to His voice recognise that the truth spoken by Him is far stronger than any human bond or chain and it alone can set us free (Cf. *Jn. 8:32*). That He should bear witness to the truth is the very reason why our Lord came into the world. Though our Gospel text does not include it, Pilate asks Jesus a very important question: *What is truth?* (*Jn. 18:38*). In doing so, Pilate gave voice to a fundamental human desire; for we are ordered for the truth. Our nature yearns to know what is true. We want to know the nature of things; both what they are and ultimately why they are. At all levels of our being, truth is an absolute necessity. Truth does not constrain us or limit us. In fact, Our Lord says very plainly, *you will know the truth and the truth will set you free* (*Jn. 8:32*).

In the absence of truth, there can only be confusion and ultimately, bondage and chaos. Our liturgy today speaks of Our Lord's universal kingdom as *a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace* (Preface of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe). Is this fantasy or reality? The events of the last week in Paris, in Mali and elsewhere are surely in the forefront of our minds. On Thursday I spoke with a friend whose sister lives in Paris and he told me of the terror they are experiencing. His own demeanour betrayed real concern for his sister and her husband and their young family. Ours has become a world defined by the threat of a terrorism whose reach is seemingly universal. And so in the interest of safety it seems that more and more freedoms are being taken away just to keep a semblance of peace. Different explanations are proffered as we try to come to grips with the state of our world but the issue is ultimately theological because our belief in God or a lack thereof determines everything we think and do. The God we believe in determines how we live and act. Evidently, not all religions are the same.

Ever since Our Lord established His kingdom there has only been one choice: Christ or chaos. Christ does reign as King either through the peace of His presence or through the chaos of His absence. For two thousand years, despite persecutions, betrayals and the outright rejection of the truth of Christ, the Catholic Church has served as the moral authority in our world and the evidence of history is clear: it is good for man to receive the gospel. The terror that France is experiencing and which threatens all of us is not new. In 1790 the Church in France lived through *the Terror*, as it was then known; when the revolutionary government, seeking to impose a new order on the country, persecuted and executed French citizens by the thousands because they refused to be part of a new world order from which God, specifically Christ our Lord, had been banished. In time, the Vendée region of France, there was an uprising against the chaos and terror of the Revolution and the men who rose up in defence of the traditional Faith wore over their hearts an emblem of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Etched on these emblems were these words: *Dieu le Roi; God is the King*. This is what we affirm in today's celebration: God is the King! If only it were simply a matter of words. This affirmation requires action on our part, an individual act first and then a collective effort; and this act is the consecration of ourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What does this mean that *I consecrate myself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*? It means simply that I conform myself to His Sacred Heart, with all that this entails, and to the spread of God's Kingdom.

Our God is not an impersonal force, a generic god of sorts but a Personal God who in a specific time in history entered our world and became Man, and whose Sacred Heart expresses all that we His disciples are called to be: men and women of passionate love and devotion, disciples whose own hearts are gentle and humble. At the personal level, this means that each one of us must realise that the kingdom of God is primarily an inner reality. Our Lord declared, *Behold, the kingdom of God is within you (Lk. 11:21)*. Perhaps more than any other statement, this saying of our Lord reveals the nature of this kingdom. Daily we pray, *Thy kingdom come*. One of the early Church Fathers observed that *he who prays for the coming of God's kingdom prays rightly to have it within himself, that there it may grow and bear fruit and become perfect. For God reigns in each of his holy ones (Origen)*. Out of the experience of our interior regeneration which effects above all freedom from sin and attachment to sin, we live our lives in Christ in a spirit of daily conversion and progressive identification with the life of Jesus. Christian life is the personal relationship with Jesus that culminates in union with him through grace, love and imitation.

The Feast of Christ the King was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925, almost one hundred years ago, 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. The pope then observed *that as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Saviour, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations (Quas primas, 1, December 11, 1925)*. History and our current situation both bear witness to the truth of these words. There is one remedy: the kingship of Christ and submission to the rule of Christ, our Saviour.

*My kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36)*. When our Lord spoke these words to Pontius Pilate it may be said that He established a principle by which we, His disciples, are to govern our own lives. Pope Pius noted: *Before the Roman magistrate he declared that his kingdom was not of this world. The gospels present this kingdom as one which men prepare to enter by penance, and cannot actually enter except by faith and by baptism, which, though an external rite, signifies and produces an interior regeneration. This kingdom is opposed to none other than to that of Satan and to the power of darkness. It demands of its subjects a spirit of detachment from riches and earthly things, and a spirit of gentleness. They must hunger and thirst after justice, and more than this, they must deny themselves and carry the cross. (Quas primas, 15)*.

In the chaos of His absence, we His disciples resolve to bring about God's kingdom principally through our own personal conformity to His Sacred Heart. This is how Christian civilization was established and this is how it must be re-established. With the Psalmist we say, *Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge; for I have believed thy commandments*. If we wish to strengthen ourselves and especially our young people in the face of this chaos, we must recover and rediscover the truths and traditions which strengthened our ancestors in their times of trial. Our future is in tradition.

In the bulletin today you will find an act of consecration to Our Lord's Most Sacred Heart. Recite it in your homes. At our shrine of the Sacred Heart there are prayer cards that can help all of us to begin to make reparation and to order our lives under the Kingship of Our Lord's Most Sacred Heart. Please make use of them. Above all, rejoice today because Our Lord truly is King. *His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed (Dan. 7:14)*.