

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE.

November 26, 2023

Today, we celebrate the feast of Jesus, the King of kings.

Polykarp, the second-century bishop of Smyrna, was arrested and brought before the Roman authorities. He was told if he cursed Christ, he would be released. He replied, "Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my King, Jesus Christ Who saved me?" The Roman officer replied, "Unless you change your mind, I will have you burnt." — But Polycarp said, "You threaten a fire that burns for an hour, and after a while is quenched; for you are ignorant of the judgment to come and of everlasting punishment reserved for the ungodly. Do what you wish."

The Franciscan Order, following the lead of its great thirteenth-century theologians St. Bonaventure and Blessed Duns Scotus, was instrumental in establishing the Feast of Christ the King and extending the celebration to the other local Churches. It was not until 1925, in his encyclical *Quas Primas* that Pope Pius XI instituted The Feast of Christ the King for the Universal Church. He did so because he recognized that the people had "thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives," believing "these had no place in public affairs or in politics." Pius connected the increasing denial of Christ as king to the rise of secularism throughout Europe. At the time of *Quas Primas*, many Christians (including Catholics), had begun to doubt Christ's authority and existence, as well as the Church's power to continue Christ's authority, because they had been witnessing the rise of non-Christian dictatorships in Europe. These dictators often attempted to assert authority over the Church. Pope Pius XI hoped the institution of the feast would have various effects: 1. That nations would see that the Church has the right to freedom, and immunity from the state (*Quas Primas*, 32). 2. That leaders and nations would see that they are bound to give respect to Christ (*Quas Primas*, 31). 3. That the faithful would gain strength and courage from the celebration of the feast, as we are reminded that Christ must reign in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies (*Quas Primas*, 33).

Although Emperors and Kings now exist mostly in history books, we still honor Christ as the King of the Universe by enthroning him as King in our hearts and allowing him to take control of our lives. When we accept Jesus as the King of our lives, then everyone and everything else falls into its proper place. We are also challenged to find Christ the King in everyone around us. As loyal subjects of Christ the King, we are invited to treat others with justice and compassion as Jesus did, especially those whom we consider the least important.

We need to surrender our lives to Christ's rule: Since Christ, our King, lives in our hearts with the Holy Spirit and His Heavenly Father and fills our souls with His grace, we need to learn to live in His Holy Presence, doing His will by sharing His forgiving love with others around us. We need to be constantly aware of His Presence in the Bible, in the Sacraments, and in the worshipping community.

We need to fight against the enemies of Christ's Kingdom: Terrorism has affected the entire world, including Christ's Kingdom on earth. These terrorists are people who slaughter the unborn; engage in a frontal attack on the modern family through provocative television shows, movies, music, and pornography; eradicate any recognition of God from public display and public schools. Hence, Jesus, the King, needs convinced apostles who are prepared and ready to fight against these enemies, first by

prayer, then by accepting willingly the sufferings that come our way and offering them to God with Jesus, our King, in reparation for our sins and the sins of the world, and finally by living lives of loving, humble service, using our gifts generously for all. The battlefield is the heart, the home, the school, the place of employment, the neighborhood, and the parish. These provide new and exciting challenges, new opportunities for us to do, ourselves, what is right and to live out the Truth of Jesus Christ our King, neither compromising with sin nor passing judgment on the motives or guilt of any of our brothers and sisters, but loving and praying for all of us. To ensure that Jesus is always the King of our hearts, we need to make a permanent, total commitment to Him and live out that commitment with the necessary sacrifices, conviction, hard work, and daily, serious prayer.

We need to use what authority we have been given to pass on Jesus' message. This feast is an invitation to all those who have power or authority in the government, in public offices, in educational institutions, and in the family to use it for Jesus. Are we using our God-given authority to serve others with love and compassion as Jesus did? Are we using it to build a more just society rather than to boost our egos? As parents are we using our God-given authority to train our children in Christian ideals and the committed Christian living we faithfully model for them?

We need to make Christ the King of our Personal, Familial, Social, and Cultural life. How to make Christ the King of our Personal: By allowing Him to be King and center of our heart through prayer, receiving the Sacraments and freely entering a personal relationship with Him; Familial: By creating a proper rule and servant-leadership in the family – let us have a “king,” a “queen,” “prince” and “princesses” in our home; Social: By not divorcing ourselves from the state, from legislation and from affecting the social order; and Cultural: By bringing Christ and His Beauty and Radiance into the living traditions of our community.

The Solemnity of Christ the King is not just the conclusion of the Church year. It is also a summary of our lives as Christians. On this great Feast, let us resolve to give Christ the central place in our lives and to obey His commandment of love by sharing our blessings with all his needy children. Let us conclude the Church year by asking the Lord to help us serve the King of Kings as He presents Himself in those reaching out to us. “To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His Blood and made us a Kingdom, priests for His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”.