

The concept of Kingship is an eminently Scriptural one, following upon the lived experience of the Jews and peoples of the ancient Near East. There had always been some sort of ruler from the tribe of Judah until the Romans imposed on the Jews Herod, first as Tetrarch, then as King of the Jews in 37 B.C. And so it was understandable that shortly before the birth of the Messiah, there was intense messianic expectation in Israel.

The Kingship of Christ is founded primarily on the sacred humanity of Jesus. The title and the power of King belong to Christ as man in the strict and proper sense. For it is only as man that he may be said to have received from the Father "power and glory and a kingdom," as foretold by the prophet Daniel (cf. 7:13-14.)

Do we see in Jesus Christ the cause of our joy, the defender of our true freedom and the source of our strength? In the West, the Church came to be identified with the Kingdom of God. The Church was the "reign of Christ," and "the reign of heaven." Even now, his saints reign with him, namely those who "seek those things which are above, not the things of the earth." (cf. Col. 3:1) Christ is the author of happiness and true prosperity for every man and for every nation. St. Augustine could write in an epistle: "For a nation is happy when its citizens are happy. What else is a nation but a number of men living in concord?"¹

Our own experience teaches us this. Could we not also say that a family is happy when its members are happy or a country is tranquil when its citizens are tranquil?

¹ St. Augustine *Ep. ad Macedonium*, c. iii

The lesson is clear- the Church helps people to discover their deepest longing in Christ, even while living in the world. We will never discover happiness by solely trusting in ourselves, or in a political structure that rules, still less in immediate sensate pleasures the world offers. All of these things have their place, but as a means to our true end, not as ends in themselves.

The observance of the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy highlighted in so many ways how that horrible event changed America. I was born at the tail end of the post-World War II population explosion known as the Baby Boom generation. Catholics were justifiably proud in the election the first Catholic to hold the nation's highest office, given the documented history of anti-Catholicism earlier. His senseless **assassination** is often said to mark the **death of American innocence**. Some may argue that point, but it caused people to think differently of government, especially with all the conspiracy theories that followed.

Perhaps some of our problems in society today are a mere reflection of a mistaken understanding of the true source of our authority. "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." Thus spoke the criminal next to Jesus. This misguided display of pride was quickly answered by the *good thief*, before Jesus could even answer. "Have you no fear of God?" Jesus responds: "Truly, I say to you, *today* you will be with me in Paradise. Life is being with Christ, because where Christ is, there is his Kingdom."²

We are so slow to learn the import of Christ's kingship, and of the reality of his kingdom. His kingdom is not of this world, yet he did come into the world. His enthronement became complete on the Cross, where he experienced utter forsakenness so that we might have true freedom.

² (Pope Benedict XVI, 25 Nov. 2007: St. Ambrose: *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke*, 10, 121).

The Feast of Christ the King is a feast of hope. It calls us to hope against hope that the eternal priest and universal king has implanted within us a new rule, one that guides us to the promised land. “Divine love has become ‘at home’ on the earth through him.”³ Thus we are called to trust in this kingly rule of Christ and to believe that he will rule us with equity and justice and in love.

His rule in our lives casts out fear, the fear that holds us captive and all too often leads us to seek refuge in society’s rulers, blindly following the latest false promise of security, friendship and fulfillment. Conversely, fear can also draw us further into ourselves, shutting us off from a world that is seen as evil in itself.

As Pope Benedict once noted about this Feast: (Angelus of 18 Nov. 2007): “Let us not fear the future, even when it can appear with bleak colors, because the God of Jesus Christ, who entered history to open it to its transcendent fulfillment, is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last (cf. Rev. 1: 8).”

As we observe the last Sunday of this liturgical year, let us beg God’s continued blessing, that we might recognize Christ’s sovereignty in our lives, not one of subjugation, but of making possible our fullest freedom by entrusting our lives to His loving hands. Praise be to Christ our King.

³ “The King and His Kingdom,” Hans Urs von Balthasar, from *You Crown the Year with your Goodness: Sermons Throughout the Liturgical Year*, p. 240.