

Solemnity of Christ the King  
November 19-20, 2016  
Readings: 2 Samuel 5:1-3; Col. 1:12-20; Luke 23:35-43

*Jesus our King, our source of strength.*

Generally speaking, we Americans do not know what to make of royalty. Just when we think it has faded, it seems to make a comeback. Today's Solemnity of Christ the King invites us to think about royalty as it applies to our Lord and Savior.

If that is hard to do, you are not alone. Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical on the Kingship of Christ, noted that during his earthly life Jesus "refrained from the exercise of such authority," adding that he himself "disdained to possess or to care for earthly goods." The title and the power of King belong to Jesus as man, he "who has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light," as we heard in today's Letter to the Colossians.

His kingdom is not of this world, yet he did come into the world. He experienced utter forsakenness so that we might have true freedom. The world that at times is completely opposed to God, the worldly who mock Christ crucified, and even us, those of his faithful followers who because of sin too often trust in our own power—all sin is vanquished on the Cross.

The Feast of Christ the King is a feast of hope. Our faith 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."<sup>1</sup> I also believe that divine love has been manifest all throughout this Jubilee Year of Mercy, ending this weekend. Truth and mercy have met in the confessional in the loving gaze of the merciful Father. Our Catholic faith does not see the two in opposition, but as two sides of the same coin of God's love.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, "You Crown the Year with your Godness," homilies. P. 240 Ignatius Press,

As Cardinal Schonborn from Vienna said at a conference on Divine Mercy: “There is no mercy without truth,” adding that “truth is the landing ground of mercy. If we do not give truth to our situations, God cannot offer us mercy.” The sacrament of Penance provides a worthy and effective “landing ground” for mercy. In this sanctuary of God’s love, we see how these two realities intersect, realizing that God’s power is far greater than the tug of any sin.

Jesus Christ our King rules 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. Our Catholic faith resists this despair, the vice opposed to hope.

In *Misericordiae Vultus*, the Bull of Indiction for the Extraordinary Year of Mercy, Pope Francis began with these words: “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.”

About 700 priests from throughout the world traveled to Rome last Ash Wednesday for a three-day meeting in which we were commissioned as missionaries of mercy. There, I was privileged to listen to the words for Pope Francis directed specifically to us as priest who hear confessions. It is the first time I recall hearing such a pointed discourse directed solely to us in that delicate and indispensable role. I will not anytime soon forget his words:

“Let us not forget: *before us is not a sin, but a contrite sinner, a sinner who does not want to be like this but who cannot help it...A sinner who promises to no longer want to be separated from the Father’s house and who, with the little strength he or*

she can muster, wants do everything possible to live as a child of God.... Being a confessor in accordance with the heart of Christ is the equivalent of shielding sinners with the *garment of mercy*, so they may no longer be ashamed and may recover the joy of their filial dignity, and may also know where to find it.”<sup>2</sup>

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 into His loving hands. Praise be to Christ our King.

---

<sup>2</sup> Address of Pope Francis to the Missionaries of Mercy- 9 February 2016, Sala Regia