

Solemnity of Christ the King (34th Sunday OT Year “B”)
November 24-25, 2018
Readings: Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 1:5-8; John 18:33-37

My kingdom is not here.

Pontius Pilate was hardly alone in his puzzlement at the idea of Jesus being a King. Surely, he had his own reasons for questioning our Lord, but it is equally true that the image of royalty and Jesus do not exactly fit hand in glove. Still, the reconciliation of all people under the lordship of the crucified and risen Jesus and his vision of the kingdom of God remains at the core the *Solemnity of Christ the King* established Pope Pius XI in 1925 to counteract secularism and atheism in modern society.

It was wisely moved to the last Sunday of the liturgical year, in order to emphasize that Jesus Christ is the Lord of time. In and through Jesus Christ, the whole plan of creation and redemption is fulfilled. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were focusing on Christ the King when they promulgated the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, beginning with the words “Christ is the Light of nations.” (21 Nov. 1964)

In this connection, the Second Vatican Council pointed out the special responsibility of lay faithful¹ that they possess in virtue of their baptism and confirmation. They participate in the prophetic mission of Christ. *Lumen Gentium* marked a milestone in the Church's journey in the contemporary world and became an incentive to the People of God to assume their responsibilities with greater determination in building the Kingdom of Christ, which will be fulfilled only beyond history.

I have been heartened to witness first-hand the concern of the lay faithful for the good of the Church, even in these most challenging times. Your powerful witness inspires me. Two weeks before my ordination, I was given a pep talk by my home pastor during which, he reminded me that I would soon realize that the parish contains many people far advanced of me in holiness. Learn from them, be inspired by them, he told me.

Jesus is our Lord and King. He spoke these prophetic words, “My kingdom is not here.” Before the birth of Christianity, Rome had its

¹ (see Vatican II decree "Apostolicam Actuositatem").

share of basilicas, the name given to buildings used for public purposes including administration, law, even as marketplaces. A few remain in ruins scattered within the Roman Forum. Later, the Church adapted this architectural form into Christian usage for worship.

Thanks to the hard work of my predecessor here, our own Cathedral has a special bond of affinity with the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome. While we rejoice in these magnificent buildings, we tend to forget that many of them were built over the bones of martyrs. Surely, they were built to glorify God, but also to honor the saint or saints in whose name they were built.

Their ultimate witness enabled the Church to gain strength, as people saw their fervor, and marveled at their conviction. It spurred them to greater works of virtue and a stronger faith. We need that same witness today. Pope Benedict XVI wrote a letter in 2006 on this Solemnity, addressed to the Archpriest of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in which he observed:

“These forebears in the faith glorified with their lives, and especially with their martyrdom, the divine Kingship of Christ, who declared himself King, but not of this world...The throne of this King whom we worship today is the Cross, and his triumph is the victory of Love, an almighty love that from the Cross pours out his gifts upon humanity of all times and all places.”²

We who desire to belong to the truth must testify to it, and we testify to the truth by listening to the voice of Jesus. No earthly glory can satisfy, nor substitute for the Lord in our lives. Jesus Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth, as foretold in the Book of Revelation. He is the faithful witness; to him we turn our earthly gaze, that we may one day be united with him in heavenly glory for eternity.

² Letter of Pope Benedict XVI to the Archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, 25 Nov. 2006.