

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King.

On one level, the Solemnity of Christ the King duplicates the Solemnity of the Ascension. However, when we celebrate the Ascension, we typically focus on Christ returning to his Father and entrusting the Church to the apostles. The more profound meaning of the Ascension is that when Jesus ascended into heaven, he was seated at the right hand of the Father, was empowered to send the Holy Spirit, and was made Lord and Judge of heaven and earth. This dimension of Christ's kingship is the focus of today's reading from the Prophet Daniel.

Today's reading from Revelation prophesies Christ's return in glory at the end of time. When Jesus came the first time and lived among us, most people did not recognize him. This reading prophesies that when Christ comes on the clouds, *"every eye will see him, even those who pierced him."* In this verse *see* means *recognize*. Everyone will recognize him. His return in glory will mark the end of time as we know it, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, new heavens and a new earth, and the inauguration of the kingdom of God.

We, of course, are living in the age of the Holy Spirit or the age of the Church, the time between Christ's return to heaven and his return to earth. What does it mean to say that Christ is king today? Where is the kingdom of Christ today?

The answer to this is more challenging when we watch or read the news. On Tuesday, November 10, we were shocked at the shooting of Amanda Blackburn, the 28-year-old pregnant wife of an Indianapolis pastor. On Friday evening, November 13, we were shocked at the terrorist attacks in Paris that killed more than 120 people.

However, the truth of the matter is that Amanda Blackburn was one of 131 homicides in Indianapolis in 2015 as of November 15. The truth of the matter is that terrorists probably kill more than 120 people every day in the Middle East, many of whom are Christian. We need to ask ourselves why all of us are not more affected by the other homicides in our city and by terrorist attacks in the Middle East. Where is the kingdom of Christ in the midst of so much violence and so much indifference on the part of so many?

Jesus answers that question in today's Gospel: *"My kingdom does not belong to this world."* The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom. It is a kingdom within us and others who believe, celebrate, and live the Gospel of Jesus. As today's Preface describes it, Jesus came to establish "an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." One of the hymns we often sing is "Center of My Life." If the kingdom of Christ is to rule in our hearts, we have to make Christ the center of our lives and strive to live the values Christ lived and taught.

My brothers and sisters, what is the relationship between the kingdom of Christ and the Church? The Church is not the kingdom of Christ on earth. The primary mission of the Church is not to increase membership in the Church. The primary mission of the Church and all of its members is to bring Christ to people and to bring people to Christ. To facilitate this, Pope Francis has declared December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016 an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in the Church.