

Christ the King - B
Daniel 7:13-14;
Revelation 1:5-8;
John 18:33b-37
Little Flower - 11/25/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

The feast of Christ the King is a relatively recent addition to the calendar of the Church. Pope Pius XI established the feast of Christ the King in 1925 in response to the political situation in the world at that time. In 1925, as the forces of nationalism, atheism, and Fascism were growing, he saw the forgetfulness or even outright denial of Christ's lordship over the world. This feast was intended to be a powerful reminder of Christ's sovereignty over all forms of political government. This theme is evident in today's reading from the Book of Revelation: "*Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.*" In today's troubled times, both we and our political leaders need to be reminded that Christ is the universal king.

On one level, the Solemnity of Christ the King mirrors 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. However, the more profound meaning of the Ascension is that when Jesus ascended into heaven, he was seated at the right hand of the Father, empowered to send the Holy Spirit, and made Lord and Judge of heaven and earth. This dimension of Christ's kingship is the primary 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. As I mentioned last week, when Jesus came the first time and lived among us, many, if not 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, including his crucifiers, 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. The Parousia, Christ's coming in glory, then, is a sign of hope because it is the promise that tomorrow can and will be better than today.

According to Jesuit Father Francis Sullivan, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are not the same. Although Jesus' coming planted the seed of the kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God will only be fully realized when Christ returns in glory. On the other hand, the kingdom of Christ is an already fully existing spiritual kingdom. Today's Preface describes the kingdom of Christ as "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace." The kingdom of Christ, then, already reigns in our hearts but must be lived in our lives. We live the kingdom of Christ and make the kingdom of Christ real in the world by living the values that Jesus taught and lived.

Finally, my brothers and sisters, in today's first reading, Daniel prophesied, "*His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.*" Today many people's faith has been tested or shaken by the clergy abuse crisis nationally and internationally and locally by the situation at Roncalli High School. Today's feast, especially this verse from the Prophet Daniel, ultimately should give us confidence that, as St. Paul promised, "*all things work together for good for those who love God*" [Rom. 8:28]. At the same time, we must always work to make the Church and the world a better place for all people not just for today but for the future. As Maurice Blondel wrote, "Once we have done everything as if expecting nothing from God, we still have to expect everything from God as if we had done nothing of ourselves."