

Christ the King - B
Daniel 7:13-14;
Revelation 1:5-8;
John 18:33b-37
Little Flower - 11/21/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the Church year. This feast was instituted by Pope Pius XI at the close of the 1925 Holy Year. He wanted to emphasize the kingship of Christ over all creation. In the Preface of the Mass, we pray, "For you anointed your Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, with the oil of gladness as the eternal Priest and King of all creation...."

As Catholics, we often use the terms *Kingdom of God* and *Kingdom of Christ* interchangeably. However, Father Francis Sullivan argues that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are not the same.

The Kingdom of God will only be realized fully in a new heaven and a new earth when Christ returns in glory as described in today's readings from the Prophet Daniel and the Book of Revelation. As Jesus said in today's Gospel, "*My kingdom does not belong to this world.*" Christ's return in glory will mark the end of time as we know it. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "after the universal judgment, the righteous will reign for ever with Christ, glorified in body and soul" [1042]. Jesus made it very clear that the time of his return in glory is known only to God the Father Himself [Mt. 24:36]. Therefore, we should never attempt to match current events with biblical or other prophecies in order to try to predict when he will return. Likewise, his coming in glory cannot be hastened or delayed by anything we do. It is completely outside our power to influence his return although we pray for his coming every time we pray "Thy kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer.

At the same time, we believe that Jesus' coming in history planted the seed of the kingdom of God. The coming of God's kingdom was the heart of Jesus' preaching. Jesus said, "*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel*" [Mk. 1:15-16]. The miracles Jesus worked fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, the coming of God's Kingdom. Alluding to the prophecies of Isaiah, Jesus told the disciples of John the Baptist, "*Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them*" [Mt. 11:4-5].

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." We make Christ our King by making our own these qualities of his kingdom and living them in our lives.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus said, "*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" [Mt. 18:20]. Jesus is not found in our midst only when we gather to pray or to celebrate Liturgy. He is present whenever we make incarnate his kingdom in the world, whenever we live the qualities listed in today's Preface. We do this primarily in our relationships, whether it be couples, parents and children, relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, parishes, and all kinds of other communities of which we are part. If we live these qualities, we give witness to the power of Christ in our world even before the coming of God's kingdom. Although we cannot hasten or delay the coming of God's kingdom, we can prepare for it and help others prepare for it by making incarnate Christ's kingdom in our world today by living the values Jesus himself taught and lived.