

HIGH MASS

I thank Fr. Phillip, the other clergy and ministers, the LMS and Schola Gregoriana, and all of you for coming here today to celebrate this High Mass on the feast in the Traditional Calendar of Christ the King. As the bishop, I'm happy to encourage, where there is a wish, the celebration of the Roman Rite in the Extraordinary Form, and more, to ensure that across the Diocese of Portsmouth celebrations in Latin of the Novus Ordo, ideally with plainchant, find a rightful place within the uplifting diversity of our diocesan liturgy. When Mass is celebrated in Latin, it is a splendid reminder of the catholicity or universality of the Church across space and time, that we all, past, present and future, belong to one great family, the People of God. Latin, with its poetry, majesty and economy, is, along with Greek and Hebrew, a sacred language, that is, a sacramental that places us before God's Transcendence, and this is a vital corrective to the modern stress on immanence, with the danger of reducing God to a warm feeling within. Indeed, I might add, that although unfamiliar with it myself, the Extraordinary Form expressly reminds us that Mass in either Form is not merely a communion meal but a ritual of love, the Sacrifice of Calvary, by which, for you and for me, yes here and now, Jesus Christ lays down his life.

YES, I AM A KING. I WAS BORN FOR THIS; I CAME INTO THE WORLD FOR THIS. Pius XI instituted this feast of Christ the King in 1925 to respond to nationalism, to assert that worldly might is nothing compared with that of God the Son. He wanted to settle the so-called Roman Question, about the relationship between the Vatican and the newly founded Italian state. Secularism was also on the rise, in which authorities seek to drive religion from the public square and where many people deny God or ignore him. Evidently, in the early twenty-first century, this is the challenging issue the Church faces, and why as Christians we are called to the work of new evangelisation. In this, today's feast of Christ the King is vital. For it urges us to renew our love for Jesus Christ, to make Him the King of my heart, to commit myself anew to being his disciple, and to profess Him alone as the Way to human happiness, the Truth that sets us free, the Eternal Life for which every human longs.

Recently, an eighty-year-old man was telling me how as a teenager he used to go on long bike rides with his friends. One summer, they went on a cycling tour of Wales. Loaded with tents and supplies, they set off for a great time, yet carefully planned the whole route so that every day without fail they would be able to get to a church to hear Holy Mass. That's what I mean about putting Christ first! Catholicism is not a hobby. It's not an add-on. It's not something we do when we can. Living out my faith, developing a personal-passionate relationship with Jesus, getting to Mass and the sacraments, making time for prayer and reading the Gospels: all of this must come first in my life before anything else, so that all the rest might then follow on.

EVERYONE ON THE SIDE OF TRUTH LISTENS TO MY VOICE. Within the work of new evangelisation, Latin has its rightful place, especially in handing on the faith to the young, and plainchant too, with its changing moods and lilting melodies that capture so well the prayer and affectivities of the human spirit in the presence of God. In this Mass, in which Christ lays down his life for us, let us pray for the evangelisation and conversion of England, that through the Heart of Mary, all may come to serve Christ the King in the communion of his Church. And let us pray also for ourselves that we who profess the truth might listen more attentively to Christ's voice. Indeed, let us put Christ first, that he alone may be the King and Centre of our hearts.