

CHRIST OUR KING

Christianity is not a religion of the book, be it the Bible, the *Catechism* or whatever. Nor is it based on doctrine, beliefs, the Church's teachings. Nor is our faith based on a moral code of do's and don'ts. Catholicism first and foremost is based on a Person, Jesus Christ, God the Son, Who died and rose again for us and Who invites us into a personal friendship with Him, in the communion of His Body the Church, and through Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This is why we come to Mass: to meet Jesus, to listen to His Word, to be fed with His Body and Blood, to be united with Him and our fellow disciples. Christianity is about Jesus Christ. It's about making Christ better known and better loved. It's about helping people receive the salvation of Christ, about hearing Him call us personally by name, about having a life-long friendship with Him and about bringing others to Him. Only then does everything else follow on: the teachings of the Church, her glorious Tradition, the Bible as a library of literature, and the moral codes by which we live. All these things *come* from Jesus and lead us *to* Him. But *He* comes first.

That's the thrilling message of today's Feast of Christ the King and the Readings we've just heard. The Kingship of Jesus is *not a Kingdom of this world* as Jesus tried to explain to Pontius Pilate: otherwise his *men would have fought for Him*. No, Jesus' Kingdom is first a Kingdom of mind, will and heart, as the stunning Preface for this Mass puts it: *a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace*. Only a God Who is so utterly transcendent could be so imminent. Only a God Who is the *Alpha and Omega, Who is, Who was, Who is to come* could be such a tiny voice within. Only the God Who made this fantastic universe with its myriad stars and distant galaxies, the Crab Nebula and Titans' frozen oceans, could also be in here, in my heart and your heart, in my life and your life, in my home and your home. That's the kingship of Jesus. It's not about police and tanks on the lawn. It's a spiritual Kingdom, Truth and Love, that starts within // so as to be enfleshed in action without. *Yes I am a King*, said Jesus. *I was born for this. I came into the world for this. I came to bear witness to the Truth and everyone on Truth's side hears my voice.*

In 1925, when Pope Pius XI established this feastday, the world was in a mess, with economic turmoil and social unrest, with atheistic communism on the rise in the east and national socialism in the west. Pius XI wanted to get people to focus on Truth, Goodness and Love, so as to find in Jesus the grace, strength and energy needed to overcome the forces of darkness and to bring light and justice, peace and love.

We need this feast *today!* Our 21C faces challenges unparalleled: not communism or Nazism, but over consumption, global warming, migration and poverty, terrorism and war, discrimination and injustice, not to forget family breakdown, addiction and personal tragedy. As Catholics living in a secular culture, we may not be very numerous but we *are* that creative minority that God has put here to arrest the spiral of decline, to heal the broken-hearted, to spin anew the wheel of progress. We are Christ's hands and feet, His eyes and ears, His voice and will. We are the people Jesus wants to use in order to build a new world, a different world, a better world. He wants us to push back the culture of death in order to promote an alternative anthropology. He wants us to contribute to a civilization of love that will lead to human flourishing, true happiness, fulfilment and one day, the joy of heaven.

Dear young people, I am so pleased you are here tonight, from across our Diocese and our university chaplaincies. Because I want to make an appeal to you. As you undertake your studies, as you ponder which career-path to pursue, as you reflect on the meaning of life and where it's all going, I want to appeal to you. I want to ask you: choose God! Choose the Kingdom! Choose Jesus Christ! Deepen your personal-passionate love for Jesus and then you'll find the grace you need to make your own contribution to a better world. (You know, the word *grace* means power and energy, the ability to make the impossible possible). Look! We live in a culture with vast numbers of people adrift on a turbulent sea of indifference and moral relativism. It can't last. I won't last. It's too weak. Jesus Christ is the only Way to TGLHH&F. This is why I'm asking you: Put Him first; put His Kingdom first; put your Catholic Faith first. The 'Kingdom without' depends on the Kingdom within; we can't give what we haven't got; we need God in order to serve humanity. So in this Mass in which Jesus Christ Priest and Victim, Jesus Christ our King, lays down His life for us on the altar, let us open our hearts. Let's consecrate ourselves to His service. Let's be faithful to Him all the days of our life so that one day, when we go to meet Him, we may hear Him say: *Come, you whom My Father has blessed; take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.*