

King of Kings
Revelation 1:4b-8
John 18:33-37
November 22, 2009

In his 1925 encyclical, *Quas Primas*, Pope Pius XI instituted in the Catholic Church The Feast of Christ the King. A short time later Christ the King Sunday began to be observed by Protestant churches.

Pope Pius had connected the denial of Christ as King to the rise of secularism. At the time of *Quas Primas*, secularism was on the rise, and many Christians were doubting Christ's authority, as well as the Church's, and even doubted Christ's existence. The Christian world, had witnessed the rise of dictatorships in Europe, and saw Christians being taken in by these earthly leaders. The Feast of Christ the King was instituted during a time when respect for Christ and the Church was waning, when the feast was most needed. In fact, Christ the King Sunday is still needed today, as these problems have not vanished, but instead have worsened – and not just in Europe, but in our own country as well.

Pius hoped the institution of Christ the King Sunday would have three effects. They were:

1. That nations would see that the Church has the right to freedom, and immunity from the state.
2. That leaders and nations would see that they are bound to give respect to Christ.
3. That the faithful would gain strength and courage from the celebration of the feast, as we are reminded that Christ must reign in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies.

Today, not only has secularism strengthened, but there has also been a rise in distrust of authority – the authority of Christ has suffered as well. Individualism has been embraced to such an extreme, that for many, the only authority is the individual self.

Pius XI wrote, “... once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony.”

The pope was right. True liberty, peace and harmony – both between individuals and within one's own self – cannot be achieved until we allow ourselves to become part of the Kingdom of God. You and I are not meant to be a part of the kingdom of the world. These two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Jesus and the kingdom of Pilate, are not compatible. But how is the Kingdom of God different than the kingdom of man?

As we listen to the words of Jesus in scripture concerning the Kingdom of God, we learn that the

meek shall inherit the earth. It is said that when George III of England lost the colonies in the Revolutionary War he felt so terrible that he could not say the word "independence" without tripping over it. The King was sure that George Washington would soon have himself crowned "Emperor of the New World." That's what had always been done. But when he was told, to the contrary, that Washington planned to surrender his military commission and return to farming at Mt. Vernon, George III said, "Well, if he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world."

There is power in giving up power, in emptying oneself. Jesus knew it, Pilate didn't.

As we celebrate Christ the King Sunday this morning, my question is, "Do you believe there is power in giving up power, in emptying yourself?" Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate? Do you believe that Christ's plan for your life is superior and better informed than anything you can come up with as a fallen part of creation? Do you even believe you are fallen and sinful?

Friends, to me it makes perfect sense that Christ the King Sunday is immediately before the 1st Sunday of Advent. Christ the King Sunday is about recognizing that Christ is your true King – that you cannot govern your own life. It is about the world coming to grips with the idea that all of the worldly authorities fall under the authority of the One True King, Jesus.

How can we prepare for the coming of Jesus as our King if we don't feel a need for Him? As you prepare your own heart for the coming of the King, and as you pray for the world to ready itself, remember: There is power in giving up power, in emptying oneself. As you look ahead to the season of Advent, be assured that you will find true joy and peace only when you make the decision to submit to the authority of the King of Kings ... then the power to embrace eternal life will be yours, now and forevermore.