

King – an obscure, romantic image today. Why call Christ a king when so few exist today? And those who do exist are almost all constitutional monarchs, not as of old – when they were the giver of laws yet often above the law.

Let's go back 100 years for context.

- In 1925, Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Quas primas* declared Feast of Christ the King as an annual observance, urging Catholics and other Christians to put God in Christ first.
 - He wrote this in response to a growing secularism and atheism. He recognized that attempting to “thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law” (i.e., the law of love) out of public life would result in continuing discord among people and nations.
 - He noted that most kings in history had come to power through violence or ancestral privilege maintained by violence; while Christ the King came in peace, as peace, with an agenda of universal salvation and human dignity, who died at the violent hands of those representing the Emperor. Pope Pius declared that the Prince of Peace literally reigns from the cross, the overpowering sign of God's love.

- In 1922 Pope Pius XI's wrote his first encyclical. In it, he decried the rise of classism, nationalism, and the era of eugenics which claimed racial superiority for one racial group over all others.
- In our own country, the 1920's saw the rise of KKK in Indiana and the entire USA (as told in the book "A Fever in the Heartland").
 - The book, set in part in Irvington, reveals a nationwide touting of white superiority over people of color. The KKK professed a hate for these "colored", and for Jews, Catholics (Italians, Irish, Eastern Europeans), Greeks, Japanese, Chinese. All of them faced threats, beatings, lynching, and political disenfranchisement.

In reflecting upon this, I found great irony. Because we are reliving much of the past right now, 100 years later.

- The rise of nationalism and dictatorial rule across the world, with cooperation, collaboration and the common good gravely threatened is disturbing, to say the least.
- We endure a true lack of peace. Conflicts are real, many smoldering beneath the surface in tunnels or caverns of mind or heart. They are fueled by resentments, injustice, "isms" of every kind that diminish the other, fear and hate.

- The KKK has re-emerged in its violence and entered alliances with other hate groups and national militias.
- And the richest few as a class, beyond and above the many, act as entitled rulers (not servants) of our day

It is as if we have been transported back 100 years, with the horrors of the 20th century, especially World War II, obliterated from memory.

Going back to the 1925 encyclical, though it was primarily addressed to Catholic bishops for the institution of this feast, Pope Pius in section 33 encouraged the laity in their living the feast of Christ the King. He wrote:

“The faithful, moreover, by meditating upon these truths, will gain much strength and courage, enabling them to form their lives after the true Christian ideal.

If to Christ our Lord is given all power in heaven and on earth;

“if all men, purchased by his precious blood, are [embraced by] his dominion;

“if this power embraces all men, it must be clear that not one of our faculties is exempt from his empire.

- Christ must reign in our minds, which should assent with perfect submission and firm belief to revealed truths and to the doctrines of Christ.

- Christ must reign in our wills, which should obey the laws and precepts of God.
- Christ must reign in our hearts, which should spurn natural desires and love God above all things, and cleave to him alone.
- Christ must reign in our bodies and in our members, which should serve as instruments for the interior sanctification of our souls; and to use the words of the Apostle Paul, **as instruments of justice** [unto God.]
—*Quas primas*, §33

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops says of the Feast:

“For Christians, when our faith is repeatedly marginalized in public life, we can fall into the habit of compartmentalizing our lives. We love Jesus in our private lives, but we shrink from acknowledging the kingship of Christ in social life. When we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, we declare to the world and remind ourselves that Jesus is the Lord of the Church and of the entire universe.”

On December 24, we will embark on a Holy Year, 2025. It has been declared a Year of Hope, rooted in the Incarnation. It is, as well, the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea,

from which we have the creed we proclaim each week, whose central focus is Christ, that is, our hope.

Having reflected through the lens of history today, is that true in our lives – both our personal spiritual lives, and the everyday actions, words, attitudes and values found in Christ? Is Christ our hope?

Can we sing in mind and heart: "In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song?"

Can we live the truth of Christ, noted in the Gospel today, and laid out so beautifully in the great "emptying hymn" of Philippians 2:5-11: "Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not snatch at equality with God. Rather, he emptied self, taking the form of a servant"?

Can we live as that Christ, emptying ourselves of that which is not of his truth, his peace, his hope?

Please God, may it be so.