



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Reflections for the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Solemnity
of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
November 24, 2024
Sister Mary Susan Remsgar

Dn 7: 13-14
Ps 93: 1, 1-2, 5
Rv 1:5-8
Jn 18: 33b-37

Today, the final Sunday of the Church's liturgical year, we come together to celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. The origin of this feast occurred in 1925 when Pope Pius XI wrote the encyclical titled, "Jesus Christ the King." He did so following World War I, in response to the growing secularism and nationalism in Europe which was threatening the world. Europe was in the throes of warring nations, cultures and religions as totalitarian governments became more oppressive and violent. In the face of such abuse of power, Pope Pius placed public emphasis on Jesus as King of heaven and earth.

This year, 2024, not quite a hundred years later, Pope Francis recently wrote an encyclical titled, "He Loved Us." In it, Pope Francis reflects on the human and divine love of the heart of Jesus Christ. While there have been previous encyclicals on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope Francis chose to speak again, at this time in our world's history, of the loving, tender, merciful heart of Jesus. The reason Pope Francis gave for doing so is this: "When we witness the outbreak of new wars, with the complicity, tolerance or indifference of other countries, or petty power struggles over partisan interests, we may be tempted to conclude that our world is losing heart." Both of these encyclicals, it seems, relate to the past and present condition of humanity in need of God's saving grace, conversion and transformation.

The title, "Christ the King," has its roots both in Scripture and in the theology of the Kingdom of God. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Messiah is represented as a king. In our first reading from the prophet Daniel, we hear, the Son of Man, Jesus, received everlasting dominion, glory and kingship from God. Our second reading from the Book of Revelation, speaks of Jesus as the beginning and the end, the firstborn of creation who will come again at the end of time. These two readings offer hope and consolation to a suffering people, both then and now. As Christians, we hold on to God's promise that Jesus will come again and will make all things new. Until then, God has called us to help in the creation of his kingdom here on earth. This is part of the message of this feast of the kingship of Jesus.

In the New Testament, the Kingdom of God is the center of Jesus' teaching. We hear today, in our second reading, Jesus has made us, all of us, into a kingdom of priests for God. In the Gospel of Luke we are told, "The kingdom of God is among you, within among you." What does that mean? When Jesus spoke to Pilate as we heard in today's gospel, Jesus inferred that his kingdom is spiritual, not material. This kingdom is not defined by earthy power and dominance. Rather it is a kingdom of love, humility, justice and mercy. Teilhard de Chardin once wrote, "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience." Teilhard also stated that "all creation is in the process of divinization." That is to say, God is inviting us, drawing us, encouraging us, leading and guiding us to become more Godlike. The kingship of Jesus is experienced in our relationship with him as

Reflections for the 34th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
November 24, 2024
Sister Mary Susan Remsgar

lover rather than lord. In his book, “The Universal Christ,” Richard Rohr writes, “We have divine DNA in our makeup. When we were created, God loved us into being. God not only gave us our own life, God gave us a share of God’s own life. This inner divinity exists in all persons, without exception, without exclusion and is never withdrawn.” God became like us in Jesus so we could become like God who is Love.

When Jesus entered the world, he did not come as the Messiah the Jews were expecting, as a king who would liberate them from the tyranny and oppression of foreign empires. The disciples, too, were expecting a political leader and were confused and disillusioned when Jesus failed to meet their expectations. Jesus does not issue orders, give commands or make threats. He does not impose himself on us. Even when performing miracles of healing for those who cried out to him or approached him, Jesus respectfully and compassionately responded to what was being asked of him.

Jesus’ mission on this earth was to lead us to the Father, to be the Love of God Incarnate and to be the Way, the Truth and the Life for us. In so doing, Jesus offers to free us from all types of bondage, enabling us to live peacefully and happily on earth and promising life in his kingdom that will have no end. As Jesus was given his mission from God, so, too, we have been given a mission. We are called to follow Jesus, to love and serve him by loving and serving one another. Jesus so identified with the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted, all those who are mistreated and victimized that he said what you do for one of these least ones, you do for me. The singular power of Jesus’ kingship and kingdom is love. He invites us to surrender to love and to allow his love to reign in our hearts. Going back to Pope Francis’ encyclical, he says, “Only love will save humanity.”

This feast of Christ the King is a bridge to the Advent and Christmas Seasons during which we wait for, hope for and welcome Christ, the Newborn King, the one who calls us once again, to bring his love to our fragile world of broken promises and broken hearts. May we continue, with the help of God’s grace, to become a hope-filled, loving people who bring light, compassion, justice and peace into a somewhat darkened world. If we do not do so, who then will?