

Solemnity of Christ the King

On the last Sunday of each liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Pope Pius XI instituted this feast in 1925 with his encyclical *Quas Primas* ("In the first") to respond to growing nationalism and secularism. He recognized that the political and social ills would breed increasing hostility against the Church. His encyclical reminds the faithful that while governments and philosophies come and go, Christ reigns forever.

"The kingdom, already present and growing in our midst, engages us at every level of our being and reminds us of the principle of discernment which Pope Paul VI applied to true development: it must be directed to 'all men and the whole man.'"

— Pope Francis
Evangelii Gaudium, 181

The Kingdom is Holistic

Secularism divides our public selves from our private selves. When governments limit the rights of religious ministries, secularists claim that religious freedom is not harmed because we still have freedom of worship – we are free in private but not in public. But the kingdom of God calls us to a whole life of worship and service in the public square. We cannot worship on Sunday and then deny Christ's teaching in the way we run our ministries throughout the week.

Nationalism, on the other hand, divides our loyalties. It is good to love one's country, but ultimate loyalty is due only to Christ and his kingdom. Ideologies that ask us to put our nation above Christ and his Church are incompatible with service to the kingdom.

Photo credit: CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz
Evangelii Gaudium, © 2013 Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.
Homily of Pope Francis, © 2013 Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.
Angelus Address, © 2015 Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

"Jesus is the center of creation; and so the attitude demanded of us as true believers is that of recognizing and accepting in our lives, the centrality of Jesus Christ, in our thoughts, in our words, and in our works."

Homily of Pope Francis,
Solemnity of Christ the King
November 24, 2013

The Kingdom Demands Discipleship

We must work every day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to draw closer to Jesus. In our own increasingly "post-Christian" society, we cannot be complacent in our spiritual lives. To acknowledge the kingship of Christ means that we should dedicate ourselves to prayer, to building up our families and our parish communities, and to bringing healing to a broken world.

The Kingdom is Humble

Jesus inaugurates a kingdom that grows through humble acts of service. Even as her freedom to carry out her ministries is threatened, the Church must patiently continue to serve the poor, educate the young, welcome the migrant, visit the prisoner, heal the sick, bury the dead, and love others.

**"The kingdoms of this world at times are sustained by arrogance, rivalries and oppression; the reign of Christ is a 'kingdom of justice, love and peace.'
For a Christian, speaking of power and strength means referring to the power of the Cross, and the strength of Jesus' love: a love which remains steadfast and complete, even when faced with rejection, and it is shown as the fulfillment of a life expended in the total surrender of oneself for the benefit of humanity."**

— Angelus Address of Pope Francis
Solemnity of Christ the King,
November 22, 2015



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF
CATHOLIC BISHOPS

More resources from the Ad Hoc Committee
for Religious Liberty available at

www.usccb.org/freedom

