

NOVEMBER 20, 2022: JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE



Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, and it is a good time to reflect on our relationship with Christ as our King. I remember a conversation I listened to—about 23 years ago—where someone spoke about the use of titles ‘Lord’ and ‘King’ for Christ. He believed that they were no longer effective, and we should change them to more democratic sounding titles like ‘President’. He believed that these titles were outdated and off-putting. This conversation really got me thinking, but since the comments were directed at someone else and not me, I did not reply to what he said.

Over the years I have thought a lot about his statements and concluded that he was dead wrong. The titles for Jesus as Lord and King are just as necessary today as when they were first used. Our faith is not based on democratic principles: we do *not* take polls or have elections; we do *not* use referendums to determine what are our faith and moral life should be. The reality is that we do *not* get to choose Christ as our King—that is who He is! We may not acknowledge Christ as a king, but it does not change the truth of our relationship with Him.

Our relationship with Christ is that of a subject who is wholly dependent upon Him. Jesus never needs anything from us, but we must rely upon Him to provide what we need. As we hear in one of the weekday prefaces for the Eucharist prayers: “You have no need of our praise, yet our desire to thank You is itself Your gift. Our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to Your greatness, but makes us grow in Your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

It is only when we acknowledge Christ as King that we can truly enter into the fullness of our relationship with Him. What a wonderful gift we are given to recognize all that Christ offers us through a proper relationship with Him. This feast day helps to remind us of just what our relationship with Christ truly entails.

We are created by God to be in relationship with Him. When we choose *not* to be in relationship with God we are rejecting our fundamental nature. Jesus, though fully and completely divine, was also fully and completely human (as we said in an earlier column). In his humanity Christ showed us how to live a truly human life; to live contrary to Christ’s way, in even the smallest way, is to reject what it means to live our humanity fully. We have a duty to help people see this and when we refuse that duty, we are responsible for those who may be lost to Christ. As we hear from the prophet Ezekiel: “If you say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die’ but do not warn them or speak out to dissuade the wicked from their evil conduct in order to save their lives, then they shall die for their sin, but I will hold you responsible for their blood. If, however, you warn the wicked and they still do not turn from their wickedness and evil conduct, they shall die for their sin, but you shall save your life.” We have a responsibility to speak of Christ to the world. We have the greatest message of hope and joy that the world will ever hear—the only message that truly leads the world to salvation. We must remember what Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.” If we recognize the truth that Christ is truly King, then we must share his message with the world.

So, how do we come to bring this message to the world? We must look to Christ and see how He did it. Christ’s proclamation of the Gospel was not about miracles or exorcisms: in many ways those, at times, were distractions. Ultimately, Christ preached the gospel by living the gospel. His life became the example we are called to follow. How we become evangelizers resides most powerfully in what Saint Francis is reputed to have said: “Preach the gospel and when necessary, use words.” Our lives as Christians must become the embodiment of Christ’s message. Gandhi was once asked why he did not become a Christian since he referred so often to Christian teachings. He replied, “I like your Christ. I do *not* like your Christians. They are so unlike your Christ.” Many times, we become the blocking stones that keep others from following Christ. We do not live what we preach and that turns people off.

But we must also remember that Christ did not change the hearts of all who were around Him. Nonetheless, He still tried, and we must remember that God will not measure us by our being successful, but by our being faithful. So, how do we bring the message to the world through our faithfulness?

We must start by critically addressing our own relationship with God. We must look at our choices; do they reflect God's will in our lives? All the choices that Christ made were based on one underlying reality: "Not my will but your will be done." The same must be true for us. If we want to lead others to live a life of salvation, then we must be living that life of salvation ourselves. And the life of salvation is not about being 'good,' but being faithful to the will of God. Our choices and relationships must be grounded in, and built upon, our relationship with God. When we can do this, we truly make Christ our King!

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@theholyrood.org , or if easier please call or text me at (978) 254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".

Fr. Brian