

Homily

Christ the King – Ss. Anne & Joachim/Musicians Workshop

Nov. 20, 2021

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the Church year, and I'm glad to be with you. I'm also happy to welcome those who have come from all over our diocese for this year's parish musician workshop. They are providing our music today, and I'm grateful to all our singers and musicians for helping us to worship and give glory to God at Mass.

We've all seen pictures of the pyramids in Egypt, and maybe some of you have even been there. They were built as monuments and tombs by the kings of Egypt, and those kings were all-powerful. But the kings, and the kingdom, of Egypt are gone. All that's left are those empty pyramids, and every day they crumble a little bit more. We've also seen pictures of the Colosseum in Rome, a symbol of the power of the Roman Empire and its emperors. But that kingdom is gone too, and the emperors are no more. Even in the last century, we saw kingdoms that were built on godless ideologies like Nazism and communism, and they left behind a trail of destruction before they too collapsed. History is littered with the wreckage of kings and kingdoms that have come and gone. They were built on armies, and gold, and slaves. They were built on earthly power. But all of those kingdoms have fallen, and we can be sure that others like them will fall too.

Many people in our Lord's time called Jesus a king, and they wanted him to be a king, to drive out the Romans and make Israel a great nation. But Jesus didn't look much like a king, at least not like the kings they knew. When he was on trial, Pontius Pilate asked him in amazement: "Are *you* the king of the Jews?" In fact, Jesus was a king, the king of all kings, but not like the kings that Pilate knew. He built no pyramids, he led no armies, he wore no golden crowns.

The kingdom that our Lord established began in this world, but it certainly wasn't limited to this world. In fact, our Lord's kingdom isn't of *this* world at all, but of heaven. The kingdom that Jesus came to establish began not with a crown of gold but one of thorns. This king isn't attended by royal courtiers but by a rag-tag group of followers. This kingdom isn't built around a royal throne or palace but around a cross. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that "The true meaning of our Lord's kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross." On the cross, Jesus shows his greatest power, the power to conquer sin and everlasting death. And at the end of time, on the last day, that power will appear to all of us. Jesus will return in glory and bring all things to completion.

As we look around the world today, we see many people trying to build kingdoms that have nothing to do with Jesus. Nations and cultures try with all their might to banish the presence of God, and this goes on even in our own country. The media, higher education, business, and quite a few political leaders are doing their utmost to push Christ out of the picture and to force his followers to bend to their will. These new kingdoms are supposedly built on tolerance and fairness, on equality and enlightenment. There's no real difference between right and wrong, everything is ok, and truth is whatever I want it to be. Faith has no place in this kingdom, and everything is secularized. We have to be honest too—that kingdom can creep into our lives too. We can be taken in by its temptations. But let's ask ourselves, how is that kingdom doing? What are its fruits? In the kingdom of this world, life is cheapened, and the most vulnerable—the unborn, the elderly, the disabled—are judged to be useless. Marriages and families are breaking down, and we're slaves to technology and pornography. Mental illness and despair are running rampant, and suicides have skyrocketed. Why? Because there's no God, no love, no meaning, no eternal life. What's right in front of us is all there is, and for a lot of people, that doesn't give them much to hope for, that doesn't leave much room for joy or love.

Is that the kind of kingdom we want to be part of? Is that the kind of kingdom that will last? Of course not, it will wither away just like those kingdoms that once seemed so powerful, so impregnable. Brothers and sisters, we believe in a very different kind of kingdom, a kingdom built on the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He came into this world in our human nature to save us from sin and death, to lift us up to his Father, and to prepare a place for us in eternity. As he told Pilate, "I came into the world to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Everyone who wants to be part of this kingdom puts their faith in Jesus, not in the passing fads and attractions of this world.

Every day, in the Mass and in our daily prayers, we say these words: "Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." So what does that kingdom look like here and now? What part do we have in the Kingdom of Christ? When we were baptized, we were already made sharers in that kingdom, sharers in the life of the King who joined us to himself even in this life. We received a promise of the heavenly Kingdom that Christ established. And the Preface of today's Mass also tells us something about that Kingdom here on earth. It's a kingdom "of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace." Followers of Christ the King abide in his truth and cherish the gift of life. They live in his grace and strive for holiness. They work for justice and peace, and they love others as Christ has loved them. Then, when Jesus comes on the last day, we will be counted as members of his Kingdom, a kingdom that will never end. The Kingdom that Jesus established certainly isn't perfect yet, it's still being formed among us, it's still on the way to its consummation when Christ the King will come at the end of the ages. Let us each proclaim by our lives that Christ is our King, and we are members of his Kingdom.