

**THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING; Cycle - A; Nov. 26th 2023
Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; 1Cor. 15:20-26, 28; Matthew 25:31-46**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Perhaps you are aware that in one calendar year we celebrate a few Feasts and Solemnities in our liturgy. At the same time it is interesting to notice that none of them was introduced by the apostles or even the second century Church Fathers. These Celebrations gradually originated in the Church down the centuries. Most of the time, they had the origin in monasteries or in a particular region. When the Church approved them, they became the universal Celebration. On the last Sunday of each liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, or Christ the King. But this celebration has a 20th century origin. It is Pope Pius XI who instituted this feast in 1925 with his encyclical *Quas primas* (“In the first”) to respond to growing secularism and atheism. He recognized that attempting to “thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law” out of public life would result in continuing discord among people and nations. This solemnity reminds us that while governments come and go, Christ reigns as King forever.

Normally, the Protestant denominations don’t adopt or accept any Catholic practices. But it is amazing to notice that though Catholic Church started the celebration of this Solemnity, the Protestant denominations like Lutherans, Methodists, Anglican and Reformed and Protestant Churches celebrate this Feast in different timings.

Even many Christians wonder how we can consider Jesus Christ to be the King, who didn’t have any kingdom to rule. Unfortunately his throne was a piece of wood and crown was made out of desert thorns. Despite of these facts the Church has no doubt about the Kingship of Christ. To confirm her conviction the Church has got sufficient Biblical foundations. If we go through the Old Testament, especially in the writings of Prophets like Samuel, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, the Messiah is presented as the King and ruler. For centuries the people of Israel waited for the Messiah the King, who would be the descendant of David the king. For example, in the Book of Micah 5:1 we read, “But you O Bethlehem - Ephrathah, *too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times.*” But the Jewish people always expected a material King in Messiah. On the other hand, in the words of Jesus it is very clear that he is the King, but not of this material world.

Coming to the New Testament, *The angel Gabriel announced to Mary, “He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the*

throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” (Lk 1:32-33). Again to the question of Pilate, “Are you the king? Jesus answers, “Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?” Then he adds, “My kingdom does not belong to this world.” Then Pilate says, “Then you are a king?” Jesus answers, “You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” (Jn 18:32&36-37). Here Jesus does not deny that he is the King. That is why Pilate put a sign on the cross, above the head of Jesus, INRI, Jesus, the Nazarene, king of the Jews.

As we have just heard from Jesus, he is not the material king; thus he shattered the dreams of many including his apostles who thought that indeed, Jesus was going to capture the power from the Romans. **Though Jesus didn't capture the reign from the Romans, he captured the hearts of the people.** When the angel said to Mary that ‘**of his kingdom there is no end**’ he meant that he was not going to be a material king, but he will be ruling over a kingdom which is spread on earth and that will be the Church he would institute. This kingdom is unlimited or without any boundaries. As we know, no king on earth had unlimited kingdom, even the most powerful Emperor Alexander the Great.

We never celebrate the feast of any of past kings; once they are dead they are buried in the pages of history. If we celebrate the feast of a King who lived and left more than 2000 years ago, it means he is still living among his people, in their hearts. He never used any weapon to conquer people. **But he used the weapon of love by which he conquered the hearts of millions.** Those who can win the hearts of people will live in them forever.

For 2000 years the enemies of Christ and Christianity have been trying to eliminate Jesus from his throne. But they perished and their presence is totally wiped out of history. These days, we are very familiar with the bad media presentation against Jesus. But still he lives as King of hearts. So far as the humanity exists, Jesus will rule over the hearts of millions. From our part, we have to accept him as our King and ruler of hearts; he should be the ruler of our families and communities. A nation that tries to eliminate Jesus would be left in darkness and chaos.