

## **The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe - Lectionary: 162**

### **Reading 1 - [2 Samuel 5:1-3](#)**

In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said: "Here we are, your bone and your flesh. In days past, when Saul was our king, it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back. And the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd my people Israel and shall be commander of Israel.'" When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron, King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD, and they anointed him king of Israel.

**Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5](#) R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.**

### **Reading 2 - [Colossians 1:12-20](#)**

Brothers and sisters: Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

### **Gospel - [Luke 23:35-43](#)**

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

## The Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ | *“Pax Christi in regno Christi”*

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ King of the Universe, established by Pope Pius XI, and is 100 years old today. In that time, he was aware that everywhere he looked, he saw human societies abandoning Christian values and trying to do the impossible, to build paradise on earth through other means. He instituted today's Solemnity to remind the world that to personally reject salvation in Christ, and to further that rejection by striving toward human societies ordered by human reason unaided by God, is to reject our only hope. Pope Pius IX wrote: *"..when once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony... That these blessings may be abundant and lasting in Christian society, it is necessary that the kingship of our Savior should be as widely as possible recognized and understood, and to that end nothing would serve better than the institution of a special feast in honor of the Kingship of Christ."*<sup>1</sup>

Christ, the High Priest, savior, and King - chosen for us by God, inaugurated among us the Kingdom of God. In himself, he embodies the whole vision of the Kingdom by the way he lived, spoke, worked, taught, healed, liberated, and finally sacrificed his life in love for us. Through his taking on himself our human nature we participate in the divine life of God and have intimate access, and yet God remains transcendent and, in many respects, unknowable and unattainable. But it is for each one of us to individually profess our allegiance to him, becoming ourselves members among the diversity of people and communities which have totally accepted and assimilated the vision of life under God which Jesus proclaimed.

As we heard in the second reading, St Paul said Jesus came to *"deliver us from the power of darkness and transfer us to the kingdom"* of God. He did that through his loving obedience *"unto death on a cross"*<sup>2</sup> To say, *Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom*, is an acknowledgement of His Kingship. Of his benevolent, merciful, forgiving, rule. As Jesus listened to the thief and gazed upon him, he didn't see a stereotype nor even the man's past, but only the repentant individual before him in that moment. That was enough and is enough for all humanity to enter the Kingdom, to experience being brought from darkness into light, gaining freedom through the forgiveness of our sins.

Christians, therefore, should not give in to the temptation of compartmentalizing their lives. Crowning Jesus as King of our lives means aligning our actions and decisions more closely with the Gospel. We are Catholics both on Sunday and on Monday. Many Christians struggle with keeping their Mondays united to their Sundays. All too often Christians keep their personal religious beliefs private. They are a good Christian on Sunday morning while at mass, but then Monday morning, in traffic on the way to work, at school, few would know they are followers of Christ. Jesus doesn't really reign over their whole life.

Through obedience to Christ our King, as members of his Body, we share in that Kingship. Being made in his image and recreated in baptism, we are called to reflect these truths in our lives. We acknowledge and reflect these truths by living the fullness of his way, truth, and life - which we find in the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament. When we surrender our lives to Christ every day, we are able to have the mind of Christ, to have access to the way God thinks, the way God loves. We will live in the peace of Christ, and we will humbly listen and be obedient to his rule. In Christ, we agreed to end our rebellion.

Because we are followers of Christ the King, then we ought to be more dependable professionals, more self-sacrificing parents, more responsible workers and students, more active and joyful citizens. Even

---

<sup>1</sup> *Quas primas*, 19, 21

<sup>2</sup> *Philippians* 2:8

while being so, there is no doubt that we will experience rejection, persecution, and suffering just as Christ did, because as long as history lasts, the King will have enemies. However, authentic love for God, neighbor, and ourselves will move us to fight them using the same weapons that he used: obedience to the Father's will, and self-forgetting love of neighbor. To this point, Pope Pius XI wrote, "*We firmly hope that the feast of the Kingship of Christ may hasten the return of society to our loving Savior. It would be the duty of Catholics to do all they can to bring about this happy result. Many, however, have a certain slowness and timidity, who are reluctant to engage in conflict or oppose but a weak resistance; thus, the enemies of the Church become bolder in their attacks. But if the faithful were generally to understand that it behooves them ever to fight courageously under the banner of Christ their King, then, fired with apostolic zeal, they would strive to win over to their Lord those hearts that are bitter and estranged from him, and would valiantly defend his rights.*"<sup>3</sup>

We are not being called to engage in militant revolution, the development and installation of Theocracies, or the building of Christian enclaves. Human freedom for fundamental self-determination is given by God, and having chosen Christ we experience interior revolution and transformation which leads to increased and more vibrant civil and social engagement, as missionary disciples of Christ charged with bearing the light of Christ into the world. The Church celebrates the authority and kingship of Christ not on a private level, but she proclaims this truth openly to the world. Religious freedom means our faith can't be kicked out of the public square, not that the public square is protected from religion. Religious freedom does not mean freedom from religion; it means freedom for religion. For example, in the 1920s, in response to a totalitarian regime that had gained control of Mexico and tried to suppress the Church, many Catholics took up the cry, "*Viva Cristo Rey!*" ("*Long live Christ the King!*") They called themselves "*Cristeros.*" The most famous associate of the *Cristeros* was a young Jesuit priest named Padre Miguel Pro. When the government arrested him and sentenced him to public execution, Padre Pro did not plead for his life but instead knelt holding a crucifix. When he finished his prayer, he kissed the crucifix and stood up. Holding the crucifix in his right hand, he extended his arms and shouted, "*Viva Cristo Rey!*" ("*Long live Christ the King!*") At that moment the soldiers fired, and his blood became the seed of the Church.

The title "Christ the King" has its roots in Scripture. In most of the Messianic prophecies given in the Old Testament books of Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, Christ the Messiah is represented as a King. In today's reading from the Book of Samuel, we see the people of Israel presenting themselves as bride to David, who is to be for them a bridegroom King and which looks forward to Christ the bridegroom King to the 'the Church'. They forge a 'covenant', the only kingdom in the Old Testament established by covenant, which also looks forward to that moment in the upper room when Jesus (Luke), did the same with the apostles. In today's Psalm, Jerusalem is a symbol of heaven, where all the nations go up and the 12 Apostles judge the '12 Tribes'. St. Augustine and the early Church Fathers saw the Church as the clearest fulfillment of these scriptures.

David was chosen by God and was anointed secretly by Samuel in Bethlehem. He had settled in Hebron and was first accepted as King by the tribe of Judah, there he reigned for seven years. On the death of Saul, the northern tribes came to David in Hebron and anointed him King over all of Israel. His successful 40-year reign became the model for the promised-Messiah. In King David was seen a type, a representation, of the future Messianic King.<sup>4</sup> Jesus was the promise fulfilled. David's reign lasted a mere forty years, but Christ's reign is eternal.

---

<sup>3</sup> Quas primas, 24

<sup>4</sup> 2 Sm 7:16, Is 9:6-7, Jer 23:5

In the New Testament texts, we read that *“The Lord God will make him a King, as his ancestor David was, and He will be the King of the descendants of Jacob forever and His Kingdom will never end.”*<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Kingdom of God is the center of Jesus’ teaching, and the phrase “Kingdom of God” occurs in the Gospels 122 times, of which 90 instances are uses by Jesus. The Magi from the Far East came to Jerusalem and asked the question, *“Where is the baby born to be the King of the Jews? We saw his star... and we have come to worship him.”*<sup>6</sup> During the royal reception given to Jesus on Palm Sunday, the Jews shouted, *“God bless the King, who comes in the name of the Lord.”*<sup>7</sup> During the trial of Jesus described in today’s Gospel, Pilate asked the question: *“Are you the king of the Jews?”* Jesus replied: *“You say that I am a king. I was born and came into this world for this one purpose, to bear witness to the Truth.”*<sup>8</sup> Today’s Gospel tells us that the board hung over Jesus’ head on the cross read: *“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,”*<sup>9</sup> and that, to the repentant thief on the cross who made the request: *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom,”* Jesus promised Paradise with him that very day.<sup>10</sup> Before his Ascension into Heaven, Jesus declared, *“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth”*<sup>11</sup> Finally, in Matthew 25:31-46, we read that The Son of man will come in glory to judge us on the Day of the Last Judgment.

Today we hear the teaching of Scripture on the Kingship of Christ and the Kingdom of God, summarized in the words of St. Paul to the community at Colossae. Among the early Christians at Colossae, there were people promoting a detailed belief in angels and their mediating role in our relationship with God. Paul, neither affirming nor denying the existence of these “Thrones, Dominations, Principalities or Powers,” simply states that Christ is superior to all. The Apostle then describes who and what their new Sovereign is: true God and true Man, the true Image of the invisible God and, at the same time, the perfect exemplar of true humanity. As God’s beloved Son, our King has direct and immediate access to God. As the Image of the invisible God, Jesus, our King, is the embodiment of Divine Sovereignty. As the firstborn of creation, He is the promise of all the good things that will follow. As risen Lord, He is the Head of the Church and the promise of our own resurrection. He is Head of the mystical body the Church; Universal King; There is no divided reality for sects – there is only one heaven, one body, one spirit, one life, in the one Christ – the way the truth and the life; everything in creation is ordered to Jesus.

The Gospel reading presents Christ the King as reigning, not from a throne, but from the cross. The sign on the Cross states his crime; King of the Jews. The inscription, despite the popular Jewish speculations about Jesus’ possible identity as the Messiah of Israel, caused the bystanders to ridicule him, challenging him to prove His Kingship by coming down from the cross. To his disciples, and numerous other early Christians, that title couldn’t have been more correct, since the Kingship of Jesus was made manifest most perfectly in his suffering and death on the cross, followed by His Resurrection on the third day, as He had foretold. Amid this sin inspired vitriol and contrary to the experience of the other thief, the criminal crucified to his left, recognized Him as a Savior King, and was moved by faith to ask Jesus to remember him when he enters His kingdom.

St. Paul told the Colossians how grateful they ought to be for having been made children of the one true and living God, siblings to Christ and citizens of Christ’s kingdom. This thanksgiving rings in the depths of the heart of every disciple and ought to ring out clearly in and through our lives. To make Jesus the King of our hearts is to let him rule our thoughts and desires. In our complex and busy lives, we need to turn away from distractions, surrender our selfish wants, and let go of our fears. As in the 100-year-old words of Pope

---

<sup>5</sup> Lk 13:2-33

<sup>6</sup> Mt. 2:2

<sup>7</sup> Lk 19:38

<sup>8</sup> Jn 18:37

<sup>9</sup> Lk 23:38; see also, Mt 27:37; Mk 15:26; Jn 19:19-20

<sup>10</sup> Lk 23:39-43

<sup>11</sup> Mt 28:18

Pius XI, *"While nations insult the beloved name of our Redeemer by suppressing all mention of it in their conferences and parliaments, we must all the more loudly proclaim his kingly dignity and power, all the more universally affirm his rights."*<sup>12</sup>

Final thought. When you get discouraged, remember that in the middle of St Peter's square in Rome, there stands a great obelisk. It is about four and half thousand years old and originally stood in the temple of the sun in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis. But it was bought to Rome by the infamously dreadful Roman Emperor Caligula, who set right in the middle of the Circus of Nero, on the Vatican hill. It was there that St. Peter was martyred, and the obelisk was likely the last thing on this Earth that Peter saw. We are reminded by the Scriptures, the history of the Church in the world, and the words of Pope Pius XI, that Christ is our King. Our King is and will be victorious. On top of the obelisk there is a cross which replaced a gold ball that represented, the sun. Inscribed on the pedestal of the obelisk are two phrases declaring the victory of Christ over all creation; "The Lion of Judah has conquered" and "Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat", which translated means, "Christ has conquered, Christ now rules, Christ now reigns supreme." Christianity triumphed by the power of the cross and triumphed even over even the greatest power that the ancient world had known.

***"Viva Cristo Rey!"***

## **Executive Summary**

This briefing document synthesizes the core themes surrounding the Solemnity of Christ the King. Established 100 years ago by Pope Pius XI, the feast was created to counteract the societal abandonment of Christian values and the pursuit of earthly utopias through human reason alone. It asserts that Christ's Kingship is the world's "only hope." This Kingship is not a political or militant power but a spiritual dominion that reigns from the cross, demonstrated through loving obedience, mercy, and sacrifice. The scriptural basis for this teaching is extensive, rooted in Old Testament Messianic prophecies and affirmed throughout the New Testament, where the "Kingdom of God" is a central theme of Jesus's ministry. For Christians, allegiance to this King demands an integrated, non-compartmentalized life where faith informs all actions, from Sunday worship to Monday's professional and civic duties. This commitment involves a call to courageous public witness, fighting for the faith not with worldly weapons, but with obedience and self-forgetting love, even in the face of rejection and suffering.

---

## **I. The Establishment and Purpose of the Solemnity**

The Solemnity of Christ the King was established by Pope Pius XI and is celebrated as being 100 years old. The Pope instituted the feast in response to a clear and concerning trend he observed in society.

- **Context for Creation:** Pope Pius XI perceived that human societies were increasingly "abandoning Christian values and trying to do the impossible, to build paradise on earth through other means." He saw this attempt to order society by "human reason unaided by God" as a rejection of humanity's only true hope.
- **Core Purpose:** The Solemnity was instituted "to remind the world that to personally reject salvation in Christ" and to further that rejection through secular societal structures is a path away from ultimate hope.
- **The Blessings of Christ's Reign:** Pope Pius XI articulated the profound societal benefits that would result from the recognition of Christ's Kingship. He wrote: "...when once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony... That these blessings may be abundant and lasting in Christian society, it is necessary that the kingship of our Savior should be as widely as possible recognized and understood, and

---

<sup>12</sup> Quas primas, 25

to that end nothing would serve better than the institution of a special feast in honor of the Kingship of Christ."

## II. The Nature of Christ's Kingship

The documents make a clear distinction between Christ's spiritual dominion and earthly political power. His kingdom is inaugurated and defined by his life and actions.

- **A Spiritual, Not Earthly, Kingdom:**
  - Christ embodies the "whole vision of the Kingdom" through the way he lived, taught, healed, liberated, and ultimately sacrificed his life.
  - His throne is the Cross. The Gospel reading presents him as reigning from the cross, with the inscription above his head declaring his crime: "This is the king of the Jews."
  - This kingship is made manifest "most perfectly in his suffering and death on the cross, followed by His Resurrection."
  - The model explicitly rejects militant action, stating, "We are not being called to engage in militant revolution, the development and installation of Theocracies, or the building of Christian enclaves." Human freedom and self-determination are presented as gifts from God not to be taken away.
- **A Kingdom of Obedience, Mercy, and Love:**
  - Christ established his kingdom through "loving obedience" to the Father, "unto death on a cross."
  - The repentant thief on the cross serves as a key example. When the thief asks, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," it is an acknowledgement of Christ's benevolent, merciful, and forgiving rule. Jesus, in turn, "didn't see a stereotype nor even the man's past, but only the repentant individual," which was sufficient to grant him Paradise.
  - The "weapons" followers are to use to fight for the kingdom are the same as Christ's: "obedience to the Father's will, and self-forgetting love of neighbor."

## III. Scriptural Foundations of Christ's Kingship

The concept of Christ as King is deeply rooted in both the Old and New Testaments.

- **Old Testament Precedents:**
  - Messianic prophecies in the books of Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel represent the Christ as a King.
  - King David is seen as a "type, a representation, of the future Messianic King." His 40-year reign became the model for the promised Messiah, and his kingdom in the Old Testament, uniquely established by covenant, looks forward to the covenant established by Jesus.
- **New Testament Affirmations:**
  - The "Kingdom of God" is the central theme of Jesus's teaching, appearing 122 times in the Gospels, with 90 of those instances being used by Jesus himself.
  - **Key Events:** Multiple events affirm His kingship, including the Magi's search for the "baby born to be the King of the Jews," the crowds shouting "God bless the King" on Palm Sunday, and Jesus's own response to Pilate: "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into this world for this one purpose, to bear witness to the Truth."
  - **St. Paul's Theology:** In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul establishes Christ's absolute superiority over all "Thrones, Dominations, Principalities or Powers." He describes Christ as the "Image of the invisible God," the "Head of the Church," and the one to whom "everything in creation is ordered."

## IV. The Christian Life Under Christ the King

Acknowledging Christ as King carries significant implications for the daily life of a believer, demanding integrity and courageous public witness.

- **The Rejection of Compartmentalization:**
  - A central challenge is to resist the temptation to "compartmentalize" one's life. Christians are called to be followers of Christ not just in church on Sunday, but in all aspects of life, including "in traffic on the way to work, at school."
  - Aligning all actions and decisions with the Gospel is what it means to crown Jesus as King of one's life. This integrity should make believers "more dependable professionals, more self-sacrificing parents, more responsible workers and students, more active and joyful citizens."
  
- **The Call to Courageous Public Witness:**
  - Pope Pius XI called on Catholics to overcome "slowness and timidity" and to "fight courageously under the banner of Christ their King."
  - This fight is not military but apostolic. An interior transformation through Christ leads to "increased and more vibrant civil and social engagement, as missionary disciples."
  - This includes defending the role of faith in public life. Religious freedom is defined not as freedom *from* religion, but freedom *for* religion, meaning faith "can't be kicked out of the public square."
  
- **Embracing Suffering and Rejection:**
  - Followers of Christ are told to expect rejection, persecution, and suffering, just as their King experienced. As long as history lasts, "the King will have enemies," and therefore the subjects of the King will also have enemies.

## V. Historical Examples and Symbols of Kingship

The documents provide powerful historical examples and symbols to illustrate the public and victorious nature of Christ's kingdom.

- **The Cristeros Movement:** In the 1920s, a totalitarian regime in Mexico attempted to suppress the Church. In response, many Catholics, known as "Cristeros," took up the cry, "*Viva Cristo Rey!*" ("Long live Christ the King!").
  
- **Padre Miguel Pro:** A Jesuit priest associated with the Cristeros, Padre Pro was sentenced to public execution. Instead of pleading for his life, he knelt with a crucifix, then stood, extended his arms, and shouted, "*Viva Cristo Rey!*" at the moment the soldiers fired. His blood is described as becoming the "seed of the Church."
  
- **The Vatican Obelisk:**
  - A 4,500-year-old Egyptian obelisk stands in St. Peter's Square. Originally from a temple to the sun god, it was brought to Rome by Emperor Caligula and placed in the circus where St. Peter was martyred.
  - Today, it is topped with a cross, symbolizing the triumph of Christianity over the greatest powers of the ancient world. Inscriptions on its pedestal declare this victory: "The Lion of Judah has conquered" and "*Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat*" ("Christ has conquered, Christ now rules, Christ now reigns supreme").

## Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition (as derived from the Source Context)
<b>Christ the King</b>	The central title for Jesus, signifying his universal authority, sovereignty, and rule. This kingship is not demonstrated through earthly power but through loving obedience, sacrifice on the cross, mercy, and forgiveness.
<b>Compartmentalization</b>	The practice of separating one's religious life and beliefs (e.g., on Sunday at church) from the secular aspects of one's life (e.g., on Monday at work or in traffic). The source strongly discourages this, calling for an integrated life where all actions are aligned with the Gospel.
<b>Cristeros</b>	A name adopted by Catholics in 1920s Mexico who resisted a totalitarian regime that tried to suppress the Church. Their cry was "Viva Cristo Rey!"
<b>King David</b>	An Old Testament king whose successful 40-year reign over Israel became the model and a "type," or representation, of the future Messianic King, Jesus Christ. His kingdom was uniquely established by a covenant.
<b>Kingdom of God</b>	The central theme of Jesus' teaching, which occurs 122 times in the Gospels. It is the reign of God that Jesus inaugurated and embodies through his life, teachings, healing, and sacrifice.
<b>Obelisk in St. Peter's Square</b>	An ancient Egyptian monument that once stood in a pagan sun temple and later in the Roman circus where St. Peter was martyred. Now topped with a cross, it stands as a symbol of Christ's victory over paganism and the Roman Empire.
<b>Padre Miguel Pro</b>	A young Jesuit priest associated with the Cristeros in 1920s Mexico. Sentenced to public execution, he famously knelt in prayer, held a crucifix, and shouted "Viva Cristo Rey!" as he was shot, becoming a martyr.
<b>Pope Pius XI</b>	The Pope who, approximately 100 years ago, established the Solemnity of Christ the King. He wrote about the feast in his encyclical <i>Quas primas</i> .
<b>Quas primas</b>	An encyclical letter written by Pope Pius XI, cited in the footnotes, which established the Solemnity of Christ the King.
<b>Religious Freedom</b>	Defined in the source not as freedom <i>from</i> religion in public life, but as freedom <i>for</i> religion. It asserts that faith cannot and should not be kicked out of the public square.
<b>Solemnity of Christ the King</b>	A feast day in the Catholic Church established by Pope Pius XI. Its purpose is to remind society that Christ is the true king and that rejecting him is to reject humanity's only hope for peace, liberty, and harmony.
<b>Viva Cristo Rey!</b>	A Spanish phrase meaning "Long live Christ the King!" It was the defiant cry of the Cristeros and Padre Miguel Pro in 1920s Mexico, expressing their ultimate allegiance to Christ's kingship over any earthly power.