

# Sunday November 21, 2021

## **Solemnity of Christ the King**

### **Parishioner Reflection**

*By: Paul Legace*

In this last Sunday before we begin the season of Advent, the Church has a most solemn feast that being our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. How did this feast come to pass and why is it celebrated today? If we look to our past we can have a greater appreciation for the present. The readings provide a context for the life of Jesus of Nazareth. In the first reading God's supreme authority is a major theme for his prophet Daniel in exile in Babylon. The second reading is a revelation from John about the second coming of Christ Jesus. He wrote this for Christians in the first century who were experiencing much persecution and felt hopeless. Is there a message for Christians in the 21st century? In the gospel we were confronted with the familiar scene of Pilate questioning Jesus about being King of the Jews. Jesus' teachings and actions reveal a very different sort of King. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a benevolent King who testifies to the truth and has supreme authority over all creation.

In 1925 Pope Pius XI created this solemn feast to counter many of the secular and destructive forces that were rapidly rising in a post-World War I world. Many of the great European dynastic empires had crumbled, there had been much destruction in France and Belgium, a number of countries saw their economies collapse leaving much suffering, hatred and pessimism in Europe. Many societies saw little need for Christ in their world and emphasized materialism and an individualistic philosophy. One new political system was outright atheist. Dictators were on the rise with their destructive political outlooks such as fascism, National Socialism (Nazis) and communism. Pope Pius XI saw this first hand and felt the best antidote was to institute the Feast of Christ the King. Pius wanted to emphasize the supremacy of Jesus Christ over all peoples, nations and political allegiances. Pope Pius XI wanted Christianity to be relevant in the lives of his fellow humans and to stress that Christ's rule is eternal because he will come again to judge all humankind.

In the first reading (Daniel 7.13-14) we encounter one of the great prophets from the Old Testament. It is approximately 605 BCE and Daniel a young Jewish exile is taken along with a few friends to live in Babylon. Daniel records his experiences and prophecies for his fellow Jewish exiles. The Book of Daniel is a positive account of how he remains faithful to God in a foreign land and culture. In the reading today Daniel has a powerful vision in the dark of night. He sees one like the son of man (Jesus) coming with the clouds of heaven. He is presented to the One who is Ancient of Days (God the Father). The Father gives him dominion, glory and kingship that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is everlasting

and his kingship shall never be destroyed. The Book of Daniel is a tremendous account of how God's power shines through to convince one that God is the supreme ruler of heaven and earth, even when one seems lost and overwhelmed in the world.

In the second reading (Revelation 1. 5-8) John tells the Christian churches in Asia Minor (Turkey today), that Jesus is that faithful witness sent by God and the ultimate ruler of the kings of the earth. Jesus stayed true to his mission; he loved humankind and freed of us from our sins by his blood. He established his kingdom here on earth. He will be glorified and his authority will live on forever. John reveals the circumstances when Jesus will come again descending from the clouds and everyone will see him even his enemies. John wants to strengthen the faith of his fellow Christians who are being persecuted by the Romans for refusing to worship the Emperor. These Christians sought deliverance from the evil all around them. John tells them their deliverance, the second coming of Christ is close at hand.

Is there a message for Christians living in the 21st century? If one were to cast about our world are there destructive forces undermining our faith in God? The list could be endless. A pandemic that never seems to end, a refugee crises that calls into question how we treat our fellow humans when they lack the most basic requirements for survival, the prevalence of sexual assault in all institutions and professions, inherent racism towards indigenous people and people of colour, illicit drugs and the countless victims that seem hidden from our myopic view of the world, a climate in crises, pornography that destroys the soul and relations between men and women,... Where is God amongst all this suffering? He is here within our midst if we look closely. Jesus walks with us and will never abandon us. We need to acknowledge that we cannot live our lives without God. His power and wisdom are needed more than ever in our broken world.

In the gospel this week (John.18. 33b-37) Jesus is interrogated by Pontius Pilate. It is probable that Pilate has heard of Jesus of Nazareth but has never met him until now. "Are you the King of the Jews? Your own people and chief priest have brought you before me. What have you done?" he asks. Jesus says his kingdom is not from this world. Pilate asks, "So you are a king?" Jesus responds clearly, "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." What is this truth Jesus speaks about? How can we uncover it? Jesus through his teachings and actions reveals the true love of God. A God that is slow to anger and abounding in love. This "truth" may at times be miraculous, supernatural and beyond our comprehension. We need to acknowledge it and it can change our lives forever. As John states in his revelation, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.