Homily of Thirty-Fourth Sunday Christ the King, Year A, 2026

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17; Psalm 23:1-3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28; Matthew 25:31-46

Today, the Thirty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, marks the end of the Catholic Church's liturgical year. Next Sunday begins the Advent and a new liturgical year. The Catholic Church ends its liturgical year with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe.

This feast was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925 as a statement of faith against the prevailing ideologies at that time which attempted to exclude faith, religion, and God from humanity. This feast is even more relevant to us now that we face more harmful anti-Christian ideologies. For instance:

- Rejection of ecclesiastical structures and religious' influence in social, political, intellectual, and public life. The USA leadership recently resented Pope Leo's admonishment on a few political and human right issues in the country. There are countless instances of economic and political leaders objecting to intervention by religious leaders.
- The rejection of moral or theological truths, preferring pleasure, materials, vanity, individual fulfillment over Christian teachings on marriage, the family, gender, parental rights, and the sanctity of life.
- Direct and indirect persecution of Christians. Direct persecution is where Christians are killed and expelled and their properties destroyed or seized. Indirect persecution is anti-Christian policies in our systems.

By celebrating this feast, we uphold the teachings of Scripture and the Church, and to continue to proclaim Jesus Christ as our leader.

Scripture clearly states the kingship of Jesus: The King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15); the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). Jesus declares in Matthew 28:18, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me." In Philippians 2:9-10, St. Paul writes, "God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord…"

The kingship of Jesus is in the fact that Christianity which he began over 2,000 years ago with twelve men, far later than other world religions, has spread to every corner of the earth, and has influenced every aspect of world development and history. Out of 8.3 billion world population, there are 2.4 billion Christians, making Christianity the world's largest religion. However, this number will likely change by 2035, when Muslims will outnumber Christians worldwide, according to a recently released Pew Research Center report. The Pew Research Center arrived at its projection using data mainly on fertility rates and switching patterns. So, Christians must keep this in mind when engaging in activism around reproductive rights and controls.

The kingship of Jesus is not political. His kingship is summarized in the preface of today's Eucharistic celebration as "… an eternal and universal kingdom: a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace." Jesus' teachings command a universal appeal across all cultures, races, peoples, places, and situations.

As children of the kingdom, we are sent to witness Christ in our homes, our parishes, our churches, our neighborhoods, our institutions, our work places, our business places, our market places, our gatherings, our environments, our communities, our country, and in our world. We are sent to continue his saving

works. We are kingly people (1 Peter 2:9), co-heirs of the kingdom with him (Romans 8:17), co-workers in God's service (1 Corinthians 3:9), and we are to reign with him (2 Timothy 2:11). It is by our position in his kingdom that we are able to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and care for the sick and prisoners, as demanded of us in today's gospel. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

In the first reading, Ezekiel describes the kingship of Jesus: He looks after and tends his flock. He finds scattered sheep and rescues them. He pastures them and gives them rest. He seeks and brings back the strayed. He binds up the injured and heals the sick.

The Psalm for today is many people's favorite. "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose. Beside restful waters he leads me. He refreshes my soul. He guides me in the right path… Only goodness and kindness follow me, all the days of my life… "

Compare Jesus, who is a caregiver, a provider, and a healer, who sacrificed himself for humanity, with many political and religious leaders who do the opposite: … pasture themselves not the flock, consume milk, wore wool, and slaughter fatlings. They do not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. They do not bring back the stray or seek the lost but rule them harshly and brutally…. (Ezekiel 34:2-4). Instead of "verdant pastures" and "restful waters," many leaders lead their people to thirst, hunger, impoverishment, destruction, and death. We must continue to pray for our leaders.

How does Jesus become the king of my life? It is by becoming a child of his kingdom, "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace." May truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love, and peace rule our words and our actions. Amen.

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