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Bishop of Plymouth



PASTORAL MESSAGE
25 November 2012
FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

Dear Brothers and Sisters

With our Year of Faith now in full swing, I thought I would share with you a reflection or two about Christ being indeed King of the universe.

It may sound rather quaint using this word 'King' in an age when monarchy is rare or, where it still exists, heads up a system that is dependent on an electorate. We are accustomed to this in our own country, where the Queen has been a good example of commitment to her people and to God.

When we use the word 'King' relating to Christ, we actually mean that he has all power in Heaven and Earth – we do not elect him; he chooses us and asks us to live and speak in such a way that his kingship may win acceptance by all people in our world. That is a daunting task and one that needs our whole-hearted commitment.

Our Church is about its Lord. We disciples can only be about our Master. If others are to find Jesus an attractive person to follow, what we are - what we do and say - becomes rather important. Luckily, for others to come to faith is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. But we can facilitate that process by being disciples of integrity and genuineness. Unfortunately we can also be obstacles through our sinfulness.

We find a poignant scene in today's Gospel: Jesus challenges the whole array of secular power, represented by Pilate, by declaring that his Kingdom is of a different order to Caesar's and that he stands for truth.

If we are his disciples, we also stand for truth, the truth that Christ has revealed about God and ourselves. The Year of Faith is about our readiness to explore that truth and to allow it to take possession of us, so we can give an account of it to those who ask.

We can hear much about this truth in the Lectionary of the Church, especially on Sundays, and in documents like the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Listen carefully today for that glorious description of the Kingdom of Christ in the preface of the Mass: "An eternal and universal Kingdom, a Kingdom of truth and life, a Kingdom of holiness and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace."

You and I are workers for that Kingdom. The Church to which we belong is in its own way an anticipation in history of the fullness of that Kingdom for which we pray and work. The Second Vatican Council whose agenda we still follow put it this way: "The Church, endowed with the gifts of her founder and faithfully observing his precepts of charity, humility and self-denial, receives the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that Kingdom. While she slowly grows to maturity, the Church longs for the completed Kingdom and with all her strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with her King." (Lumen Gentium N.5)

As Advent starts next week, I invite all of us to nourish and develop our yearning for the final form of the Kingdom during the weeks leading to the celebration of Christmas and the mystery of God made man.

May God bless you all.

✠ Christopher
Bishop of Plymouth

*To be read and made available at all Masses
on 25 November*



YEAR OF FAITH²⁰¹²₂₀₁₃