

# The Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe Christ the King; Cycle “C”

A **paradox** is self-contradictory statement that when investigated proves to be well founded or true: Our Christian faith is full of them. For example;

- The poor in spirit inherit the kingdom of Heaven.
- The meek inherit the land.
- The virgin shall bear a child.
- And ... The instrument of death becomes the instrument of life.

Today is the final Sunday of our Liturgical Year and we celebrate the Feast of **Christ the King** because we all need to be reminded not only that ... **Jesus is the King** – but **what type of King He is!** And since He **is** our King, all of our words, actions and thoughts should lead us to recognize Him as the Center of our lives ... the one to whom our love and obedience is directed.

But think of this for a moment...He is a King who:

- Never held a political office,
- Never earned an advanced degree,
- Never exercised cultural influence.
- ...and He died in His early 30's on an instrument of torture.

Our belief in this Kingship is the foundation upon which all of Christianity rests. When we say, “**Christ is King,**” we understand the saving message of His Church, which is so evident in our readings today.

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading from St. Paul, along with the Prologue of St. John's Gospel is the strongest, clearest, most **profound** statement made about **who Jesus is** through all of sacred scripture. Listen again to the words of St. Paul:

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He writes, *Jesus is the image of the invisible God*. What he is saying here is, if we want to know what God looks like...look at Jesus. While God remains invisible, if we want a glimpse of Him, we look to Christ. In our Eastern tradition, when the faithful pray before an Icon, it's as if we're praying before a window that looks into that figure – not just an image of the figure, but a window to the truth that resides within the figure. Paul is saying *Jesus is the Icon of the Invisible God*. Think for a moment of how so many of us pray before an image of our Blessed Mother, and how often our Blessed Mother becomes present to us when we pray in front of her image. Likewise, God becomes present to us when, during our prayer, our gaze is directed to Christ.

Then Paul goes on ... *For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible ...* He is the one through whom all creatures were made. To use John's language, He is the “Word” by which all things are ordered, determined and made. All things reflect Him and represent His truth.

Then Paul continues ... *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together - all were created through Him and for Him*. When astronomers and other learned people explore the outer galaxies of the universe, seeking its true beginning and how it was brought to its present order, Paul tells us, what they seek, is Christ. He is the beginning, the middle and the end of all things. He is the Alpha & the Omega and every letter in between.

And there's more ... *It pleased God to make absolute fullness dwell in Him*. Jesus is not just another religious figure, teacher or prophet. He is not one among many! **He is God!**

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As we proclaim in the Creed ... He is; *God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.* To use Paul’s words, *it pleased God to have absolute fullness reside in Him.* He is the highest, the Logos, the Word who governs all things.

Now I ask that you keep all of that *clearly in mind* and shift your attention to the Gospel ... to a hill outside of Jerusalem, around the year 30 and imagine this scene. A young man, nailed to this instrument of torture – the Cross, in His final agony, close to death. A brutal band of soldiers surround Him, there’s a common criminal on His right and another on His left. All but His Mother and a few of His friends have abandoned Him. He’s been scourged, alone, naked, nailed to the Cross, and it is here that we pick up the Gospel;

*The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one..." Even the soldiers jeered at him.*

*As they approached to offer him sour wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself."*

The Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the beginning, the middle and the end of all things – there He is, hanging on a tree. The one who is God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God – the Icon of the Invisible God ... **this is our King!** This is our faith, and this is the wonder and the beauty of today’s Solemnity!

What does it mean to say, “**Christ is King?**” It means our worldly definition of kingship is sadly mistaken ... it means what we take to be power has very little to do with the real thing.

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Let’s return to the Gospel...where the leaders jeered at Him saying, “*If He saved others, let Him save Himself...!*” The soldiers made fun of Him and said, “*if you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!*” Then the thief next to Him blasphemed Him saying, “*...aren’t you the Messiah? Then save yourself!*” ...and that’s the key that unlocks the mystery!

They all thought “*kingship*” meant having “*the capacity to save yourself!*” ...and that’s the irony, that’s the paradox. The true King, Christ the King, is not the one who saves himself, but rather the one who *never thinks of Himself*. He is not the one who builds Himself up, but rather the one ... who empties Himself out ... and *that is* the Icon of the Invisible God.

If we truly want to know the Alpha and the Omega and everything in between, if we want to know what holds our world together ... *it’s the power that comes from self – emptying love.* Real Kingship is not what our world tells us it is.

If **we** want real power ... then **we** should stop trying to save ourselves and focus our attention on saving someone else. If **we** want real power, then **we** are called to perform simple acts of love ... and when **we** do, we become the loyal subject of our King, *Christ the King*, and **we** discover what real power is.

***Viva Cristo Rey*** ... long live Christ the King!