

Weekend Readings & Reflections

November 20-21, 2021 – Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Reflection: *What's the truth Jesus comes to bear witness to in this last Gospel of the Church's year? It's the truth that in Jesus God keeps the promise He made to David of an everlasting kingdom, of an heir who would be His Son, "the first born, highest of the kings of the earth" (see [2 Samuel 7:12-16](#); [Psalm 89:27-38](#)). Today's Second Reading, taken from the Book of Revelation, quotes these promises and celebrates Jesus as "the faithful witness." The reading hearkens back to Isaiah's prophecy that the Messiah would "witness to the peoples" that God is renewing His "everlasting covenant" with David (see [Isaiah 55:3-5](#)). But as Jesus tells Pilate, there's far more going on here than the restoration of a temporal monarchy. In the Revelation reading, Jesus calls Himself "the Alpha and the Omega," the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. He's applying to Himself a description that God uses to describe Himself in the Old Testament—the first and the last, the One who calls forth all generations (see [Isaiah 41:4](#); [44:6](#); [48:12](#)). "He has made the world," today's Psalm cries, and His dominion is over all creation (see also [John 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:16-17](#)). In the vision of Daniel we hear in today's First Reading, He comes on "the clouds of heaven"—another sign of His divinity—to be given "glory and kingship" forever over all nations and peoples. Christ is King and His kingdom, while not of this world, exists in this world in the Church. We are a royal people. We know we have been loved by Him and freed by His blood and transformed into "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father" (see also [Exodus 19:6](#); [1 Peter 2:9](#)). As a priestly people, we share in His sacrifice and in His witness to God's everlasting covenant. We belong to His truth and listen to His voice, waiting for Him to come again amid the clouds.*



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome to our study for Christ the King. Longing for the coming of God's kingdom, let us pray in the words our Savior gave us:

All: Our Father...

Leader: *In the beginning of His ministry, Jesus had many followers, but many of them disappeared on the day of His Crucifixion. Many left Jesus even before the scandal of the Crucifixion because He wasn't what the Israelites were expecting; they wanted a powerful king who could liberate them*

with military force from the oppression of the Roman army. They wanted to be freed from suffering. When they realized that Jesus would not bring political liberation, as is manifested in Christ's responses to Pilate's questions, they abandoned Him.

Many of us are the same way in our faith still today. We want the Kingdom without the suffering and death on the Cross. The Lord takes no delight in our suffering, but through uniting our sufferings with His on the Cross, we can overcome our temptations and attachments. Our sufferings do not disappear when we meet Jesus; rather, they become the source of our communion with him. To reject the Cross is to reject Christ himself. Ponder the following questions as we watch Dr. Ben Akers in today's video on FORMED.

- *What are some of the sufferings that have remained in your life even after you entered into relationship with the Lord? Did those sufferings cause you to doubt his existence and his love? Were you able to find deeper communion with Jesus on the Cross in those sufferings?*

The Feast of Christ the King

In 1925, Pope Pius XI established this celebration as an antidote to secularism, which was society's movement away from an awareness and recognition of God's primacy. We should hold this feast day very dear and pray for healing in our culture, and even healing in our own hearts. Even if we are Catholic, we have all been raised within a secularist society and have been affected in unknown ways by an anti-God mindset. Today is a good day to pray for God to heal the parts of your mind and heart that have been affected by secularism, and invite him to be King of your life.

(Play the video on FORMED.org - [Opening the Word – Christ the King \(Year B\)](#))

FIRST READING ~ Daniel 7:13-14 ~

As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a Son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship; all peoples, nations, and languages serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.

As we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, there is an urgency in the readings to prepare and be ready for the end of time. Fr Anthony De Mello, a famous preacher and teacher once began a retreat by asking: Hands up if you want to go to heaven. All eagerly put their hands up. He responded. Hands up if you want to go to heaven now. No hands went up. He suggested they think about why they were not ready and he walked out of the room!

- *If Jesus' birth at Christmas this year was also the second coming what would you be inspired to do so that you were ready for Christ?*

The Book of Daniel is written to encourage Jewish people during a time of great persecution. Mighty armies, Kings, powerful empires would cease and be silenced by the Son of Man. This is an enthronement vision of Jesus before God the Father.

- *In the midst of super-powers and battles for resources and status do you view the world and history with hope that the way of Jesus will be victorious? When you look at the cross of Jesus do you see only pain? Or victory?*

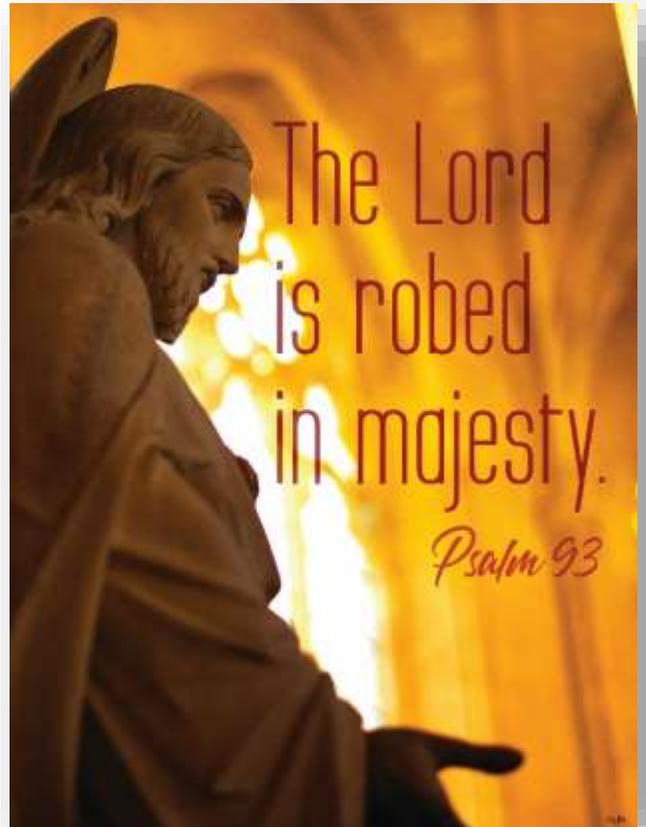
SECOND READING ~ Revelations 1:5-8 ~

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, " says the Lord God, "the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

Apocalypse is a Greek word meaning 'revelation' or 'unveiling'. Apocalyptic writing seeks to give hope to those suffering. It will end. Jesus will triumph. This truth has been unveiled in visions which make up the Book of Revelation. 666 (the Beast) was the spelling of Nero Caesar in the Semitic alphabet who blamed Christians for the devastating fires of Rome around 90 AD. Domitian who persecuted Christians in the East around 95 AD was thought to be Nero come back to life.

- *What form of persecution do you experience as a Christian? How may the words of Revelation encourage you: Jesus (was) is faithful. Was raised from the dead. Rules over all kings. Loves, frees, and forgives our sins by his blood. Made us priests - called to bring the world to God and God to the world. How could your persecution become an opportunity for witness? For God?*



GOSPEL ~ John 18:33b-37 ~

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here."

So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. 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."

In Year B readings on the Feast of Christ the King, Mark's readings are left aside in favour of the Gospel of John and a curious debate about the meaning of 'King'. Jesus is face-to-face with Pilate symbolizing secular and political power. Pilate asks: Is Jesus a worldly king or the mysterious Jewish figure spoken of as Messiah? Jesus teaches that 'king' and 'kingdom' need a new definition to cope with God's viewpoint. Such a king and kingdom has not existed in the world. The Kingdom of God involves not being served, but serving. Nonviolence. The true 'King' is one who gives his life for others not seeking wealth comfort and personal security. Jesus came into the world to bring this reality and truth into existence.

- *What 'kingdom' do you belong to? Domination, Power, Prestige, or Love, Justice, Service? Pilate or Jesus? Is the kingdom better expressed in words or actions?*

Pilate will soon wash his hands in water and pretend not to be involved in the brutality and bloodshed soon to happen to Jesus.

- *How do you pretend not to be involved in the injustices of the world in the newspaper, television news? Consider the phrase: early Christians followed before they worshipped, Christians today worship and refuse to follow.*

MEDITATION

What is the significance or meaning of Jesus' kingship for us? Kingship today seems antiquated, especially in democratic societies where everyone is treated equal and free. God at first did not want to give his people Israel a king. Why? Because God alone was their King and they needed no other. Nonetheless, God relented and promised his people that through David's line he would establish a Ruler and a Kingdom that would last for eternity (Psalm 89:29).

The Jews understood that the Messiah ("Anointed One") would come as God's anointed King to restore paradise and establish God's reign of everlasting peace for them. They wanted a Messianic King who would free them from strife and division and from foreign oppression. Many had high hopes that Jesus would be the Messiah and Ruler for Israel. Little did they understand what kind of kingship Jesus claimed to possess. Jesus came to deliver his people, and the whole world, from the worst kind of tyranny possible - from bondage to sin, condemnation and death, and to free us from Satan's

kingdom of deception, oppression, and destruction. Jesus came to conquer hearts and souls for an unshakeable kingdom - a kingdom ruled not by force or fear - but by the power of God's righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). When Satan tempted Jesus during his forty day fast in the wilderness, he offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8-9) Jesus knew that the world was in Satan's power. And this was precisely why Jesus came - to overthrow Satan's power and deception over the earth. Jesus knew that the way to victory was through submission to his Father's will and strategy for overcoming sin and Satan in the world. The Father sent His only begotten Son into the world, not to condemn it, but to save it through the atoning sacrifice which Jesus would make for us through the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary.

As Jesus was dying on the cross, He was mocked for his claim to kingship. Nonetheless, He died not only as King of the Jews, but King of all the nations as well. His victory over the power of sin, Satan, and the world, was accomplished through His death on the cross and His rising from the tomb on the third day - never to die again. Jesus exchanged a throne of glory for a cross of shame to restore us from slavery to sin to glory with God as His adopted sons and daughters. In the Book of Revelations Jesus is called *King of kings and Lord and lords* (Revelations 19:16). Do you recognize Jesus Christ as your King and Lord?

The Scriptures tell us that there are ultimately only two kingdoms in this world which are opposed to one another - the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Each kingdom is ruled by one lord or master - the Lord Jesus Christ who is the true "Light of the World" - or the false messiah and ruler who is called the "anti-Christ" and an "angel of light" who rules by lies and deception.

- *Which kingdom will you serve - today and for all eternity? The kingdom of this present world which passes away or God's kingdom which can never be broken or defeated and which endures forever? If we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and King we become citizens of an everlasting kingdom which is governed by God's righteousness, peace, and love. Is your life submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ who reigns now and forever in the glory of his eternal Father in heaven?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray ...

ALL: Lord Jesus Christ, you are my King and there is no other. Be the Lord and Master of my heart, mind, body, and soul. May I always seek to do your will and to serve your kingdom above all else. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

[Discussion questions created by Fr Frank Bird sm, Marist Priest, and distributed by www.maristlaitynz.org, were shared with permission from www.livingtheword.org.nz.]

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