



Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro

Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ

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“...Adveniat Regnum Tuum...”, “...Thy Kingdom come...”. Kingdom, King... Every single day we repeat those words at least several times, during our morning and evening prayers, when we pray Rosary, Breviary, etc. Why do we do that? What do they mean to us? What do they mean to the world today?

Eighty nine years ago, on 11 December 1925, Pope Pius XI promulgated his encyclical letter *Quas Primas*, on the Kingship of Christ. He connected the denial of Christ as king to the rise of secularism. At the time of *Quas Primas*, many Christians began to doubt Christ's authority and existence, as well as the Church's power to continue Christ's authority. Pius XI, and the rest of the Christian world, witnessed the rise of non-Christian dictatorships in Europe, and saw Catholics being taken in by these earthly leaders. “Scientific” rationalism and materialism have snatched many of the so-called intelligentsia away from any kind of religious faith. Modernism (liberalism) has made such inroads into the very heart of Holy Mother Church Herself that Pope St. Pius X had felt compelled to issue his famous encyclical “*Pascendi Dominici Gregis*” in 1907— 18 years prior to *Quas Primas*. In 1925, Europe was barely emerging from the ravages of one of the bloodiest conflicts ever known, with its successor on the horizon. Atheistic communism had taken root in Russia and was threatening much of Eastern Europe.

The purpose of the encyclical was to institute the Feast of Christ the King for the whole Church on the last Sunday of October as a “crowning glory” for the end of the liturgical year. In paragraph 29, the Holy Father states: “*We have commanded its observance on a Sunday that not only the clergy may perform their duty by saying Mass and reciting the Office, but that the laity too, free from their daily tasks, may in a spirit of holy joy, give ample testimony of their obedience and subjection to Christ.*”

The encyclical dealt with what the Pope described correctly as “*the chief cause of the difficulties under which mankind was laboring.*” He explained that the majority of evils in the world are due to the fact that “*...the men had thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics: and we said further, that as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Savior, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations. Men must look for the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ ... We*

were led in the meantime to indulge the hope of a brighter future at the sight of a more widespread and keener interest evinced in Christ and his Church, the one Source of Salvation, a sign that men who had formerly spurned the rule of our Redeemer and had exiled themselves from his kingdom were preparing, and even hastening, to return to the duty of obedience”.

Christ the King?

Yes – the Holy Father points out that, while Christ has often been referred to as King in a metaphorical sense, “*the title and the power of King belongs to Christ as man in the strict and proper sense too.*” He enumerates as example and proof of Our Lord’s royalty not a few passages from Sacred Scripture – both the Old and New Testaments – including the claims of Our Lord Himself. Pope Pius XI also notes that, by essence and nature, “*His kingship is founded upon the ineffable hypostatic union,*” or the mystical and perfect union of Christ’s humanity and divinity. Our Lord is truly King over all creatures. In the same passage, the Holy Father notes that Our Lord is also King “*by acquired, as well as by natural right, for He is our Redeemer.*”

How to understand the “nature and meaning” of Our Lord’s Kingship? The Holy Father explains that it is a “*threefold power which is essential to lordship.*” Christ is law-giver to Whom all creatures owe obedience. He is Judge to Whom the Father has given all authority of reward and punishment. Finally, His is the “executive power” of issuing commands to all of creation. The Pope goes on to say that Christ as King is both Redeemer Whose blood was shed for the Church and Priest Who offered, and continues to offer, Himself as the perfect Oblation.

With Quas Primas, Pope raised his voice: Yes, there is. There is a throne which shall never fall, there is a King who shall reign forever, and there is an Empire which brings peace, not war; justice, not confusion; eternal beatitude, not ephemeral ecstasy. This King is Christ: Which is why Pope Pius established the feast of His Kingship. An innovation? Hardly: there is no innovation in Tradition; there is no innovation when permanent liturgical Tradition is the basis of doctrine.

It was surely right, then, in view of the common teaching of the sacred books, that the Catholic Church, which is the kingdom of Christ on earth, destined to be spread among all men and all nations, should with every token of veneration salute her Author and Founder in her annual liturgy as King and Lord, and as King of Kings. And, in fact, she has used these titles, giving expression with wonderful variety of language to one and the same concept, both in ancient psalmody and in the Sacramentaries. She uses them daily now in the prayers publicly offered to God, and in offering the Immaculate Victim.

And again – His Lordship over us and over all Creation is threefold. He is a "law-giver, to whom obedience is due"; His kingdom is spiritual, "not of this world" and men can enter it only "by penance, and cannot actually enter except by faith and by baptism, which, though an external rite, signifies and produces an interior regeneration"; His kingdom is sacerdotal, for "*Christ as our Redeemer purchased the Church at the price of his own blood; as priest he offered himself, and continues to offer himself as a victim for our sins*".

It is a "grave error, on the other hand, to say that Christ has no authority whatever in civil affairs, since, by virtue of the absolute empire over all creatures committed to him by the Father, all things are in his power" and He "embraces all men". There is no "difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the State; for all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. In him is the salvation of the individual, in him is the salvation of society". It is absolutely true, thus, that "once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony".

Is it good enough just to celebrate holiday established by pope Pius XI? Do we have any obligations? If yes – what our obligations are?

It is important to recognize, however, that Pope Pius XI does not stop short with a theological description and the institution of a feast day. He rightly bemoans: "*a certain slowness and timidity in good people, who are reluctant to engage in conflict or oppose but a weak resistance...*" Instead, he calls the faithful to Catholic Action, saying that: "*it behooves them ever to fight courageously under the banner of Christ their King*" in order to: "*win over to their Lord those hearts that are bitter and estranged from Him*" and "*valiantly defend His rights.*"

The battle for Our Lord's rights continues even now, decades after the publication of the encyclical *Quas Primas*. The battle is joined in our own hearts, in our families, in our social structures, and in our civil government. It rages as never before within the ramparts of Holy Mother Church.

Without the acknowledgment of the rule of Christ, peace cannot be achieved in this fallen world. The Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ and bishops of the Catholic Church, are the representatives of Christ's Spiritual Kingship. It is through them that His Royal Will is proclaimed to the world. If this guidance is not accepted with regard to the moral aspect of questions, than we should see an accentuation of the reign of brute force, under the domination of some section of the human race usurping the place of God with disastrous results for the poor and the weak. We, Catholics should continually point out that the calumnies uttered against the Mystical Body of Christ are in main the work of the organized forces which wish to substitute for the reign of Christ their own naturalistic domination. Those forces work under Satan. Mass media propagates so-called "progress". That "progress" in politics and economics leads to decay of nations and to enslavement of masses, who as a result, will not defend the rule of Christ the King.

When we look around we will find that there are two kinds of people in this world: those who say to God, "Thy will be done" and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done". Every person who has ever lived has had one and one absolute choice: "Thy Kingdom come" or "my kingdom come". God gives us all what we want. If we want ourselves and our kingdom, not Him and His, that is exactly what we will get. And that is the definition of hell. But if we want Him and His Kingdom – then that is what we will get. And His Kingdom is Heaven.

Who we are?

Let ask ourselves question: what do I want in this world and what do I do? What do I do to defend the Kingdom of Christ (if I do anything)? What is my contribution in that battle as a lay Dominican? Am I under His banner?

Vivat Christus Rex!

Materials used:

1. Pope Pius XI: "Encyclical Quas Primas"
2. Rev. Denis Fahey, C.S.Sp.: "The Mystical Body of Christ and the Reorganization of Society", Christian Book Club of America, Palmdale, CA, 1995
3. Summary and reflections on Quas Primas by "League of the Kingship of Christ"
4. Peter Kreeft: "Fundamentals of the Faith", Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988
5. "Catechism of the Catholic Church", An Image Book, 1997