

## **THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE UNIVERSAL KING.**

Today's feast of Christ the King marks the end of the Church's liturgical year. The year ends with Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Alfa and OMEGA, the beginning and the end. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and His Kingdom will have no end. Christ is King in the truest sense, he came to show that he wanted to serve rather than being served, he does not '**Lord it**' over us. What he asks is that we respond to his lead and his love 'Take up your cross and follow', 'if you love me, keep my commandments'.

Sometimes in the course of her history, the Church has seemed to come out in an authoritarian role which has driven people to scrupulous observance of the niceties of the law, rather in the way that the Scribes & Pharisees seemed to have been doing in the time of Christ, and which he condemned. There have been stern and strict pastors alongside those who appeared to be more open and understanding of the weakness of human nature. It is important for us to be clear that God is God of love and compassion. He is slow to anger and full of mercy. But he is also just and needs to make clear to His people that it is not a case of anything goes, but literally of keeping His commandments. What are they? The law of the Lord of the Universe is in the two great commandments. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your strength, and love your neighbour as yourself. It is also summed up in the eight Beatitudes given by Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount

Too often we can be caught up in the *small print* as it were. We don't have the boldness to write large on the canvas of history that God is love. We can and do sing '**Our God reigns**'. It was taken up especially by the young people at the time of the visits of Pope John Paul II. But it is one thing to sing of it and quite another to live it out. All of us share in Christ's kingly task – but what does this mean? It means that we all must take over our own responsibility for shaping the world in the way that God wants. We have all sorts of opportunities at work, as members of families and in our social lives as well as supporting organisations societies, to do something to make the world a better place.

As our King, Christ is our law-giver. He gives us a new commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you". He loved us and gave his life for us. Could he give us anything more precious? He loves his subjects so much that he identifies Himself with the poorest of the poor: "I was hungry, and you fed me, I was thirsty, you gave me drink". He will judge us on how we served him, our king, in the lowest and the least among us. We serve Christ by serving the needy. Whatever we do to least of his brethren, he considers done to him. He will judge us on how we serve Him, our King, in the lowest and the least among us. We serve Christ by serving the needy.

This reminds of the story about St. Martin of Tours. It's said that, one day, at the city gate of Amiens, he saw an old beggar, half-naked and shivering in the winter cold. So, cutting his own cloak in two, he gave the beggar half of it. The following night, he had a vision of Our Lord wearing the half-cloak. A half-cloak we are told, but not a half-truth. The full truth is that, in giving to

others, we give to Christ! 'In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.'

We have all sorts of opportunities at work as members of families, and in our social lives, as well as by supporting organisations, to do something. Have you thought of your Sick and Retired Priests Collection this weekend? They have given so much of their lives for us, think of the homeless, Catholic Children society, etc.? I wonder whether, as we begin again the New Year of the Church with the First Sunday of Advent we try to make Advent particular time of prayer and love of God, and of thought for other people. We renew our commitment to establish His Kingdom in every human heart, beginning with our own. May He rule our minds, our hearts and our wills, now and always.