

Solemnity of Christ the King, C – November 23, 2025 – Very Rev. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Ala. – 5pm Vigil, 8:30 & 11am Sunday Masses – 825 words

Which scripture passages come to mind when we think of our Lord Jesus Christ as King? For many, it might be a glorious heavenly scene from the Book of Revelation, where the Lamb is seated on a dazzling throne. For some, it could be the shocking, gruesome image from today's gospel, where the Lord's kingship is proclaimed on the sign nailed to the Cross, and he promises the good thief that he will indeed remember him in his kingdom.

But Christ's kingship goes back to the beginning; in fact, it was foretold. The Old Testament prophecies tell of a Messiah-King; and at the very moment of his conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angel Gabriel announces the fulfillment of those prophecies in the kingship of her Son: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father."

Jesus was designated as king from the beginning, but that kingship was not revealed until the end. Moreover, his kingship, as he himself taught, "is not of this world". Thus, as it was manifested by his entry into Jerusalem on an ass, or in his dying on a cross, it did not look at all like what we imagine kingship to be. The glimpses we have of it in the heavenly vision, however, are more in line with the splendor we imagine a king to have.

Going deeper than mere appearances, therefore, we should consider how Christ's kingship touches our lives. The scene of the good thief gives us an insight into this. Saint Dismas, the good thief, says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". Christ, for his part, forgives him his sins and gives him the first plenary indulgence, assuring him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Being in the kingdom of Christ is, above all, being with him. Our entrance into this kingdom thus began at baptism, when we were united to him by grace; as St. Paul put it in the second reading, God "delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins". The devil is the prince of this world, but we were rescued from his kingdom through baptism.

Our citizenship in the kingdom of Christ is then also deepened through every worthy holy communion. We live as citizens of the kingdom amidst the hostility of this world by virtue of our confirmation. Our citizenship is also renewed through confession. It is fortified through the anointing of the sick. The grace of state – whether of marriage or of holy orders – helps us order our lives and all that is in them, each in his proper way, to that kingdom.

Yes, being with Christ is being in his kingdom. This was foreshadowed by the scene in the first reading, where the elders of Israel professed to be the "bone and flesh" of David and gathered and united around him, anointing him as their king. Our reality goes deeper, however, for in our case, through the seven sacraments, Christ truly gathers us to himself and anoints us with the oil of gladness, his grace; he takes us up into what is already his.

Because our membership in the kingdom of Christ is through the sacraments, that kingdom is uniquely associated with the Church that he founded. How important it is for us to give thanks for our Catholic faith and to treasure it. The final verse of the wonderful closing hymn today gives voice to this truth: "To you and to your Church, great King, we pledge our heart's oblation; until before your throne we sing in endless jubilation!"

We recall last Sunday's theme of perseverance: to stay faithful to Jesus until the end. Today is also the feast of Bl. Miguel Pro, a great Mexican martyr, killed in 1927 by firing squad. His last words were "¡Viva Cristo Rey!" (Long live Christ the King). He said those words as he freely extended his arms in the form of a cross (without being restrained) before his executioners. He knew even if the secular power killed him, he would live forever in the Kingdom of Christ.

Yes, the kingdoms of this world always disappoint: they come and go, and are always imperfect. But the kingdom of Christ spans every age, race, nation, tribe, and tongue; it is forever. Often shaken and buffeted by the power of darkness, the darkness nonetheless will never overcome it. Jesus knew each one of us on the Cross and has remembered us as regards his kingdom too. By being with him through the grace given us by the sacraments of his holy Catholic Church, we are in his kingdom even now. And in that kingdom we hope to die – and rise to eternal life.