

Nation, Home, and Heart
Christ the King (B)
(Dn 7:13-14; Rv 1:5-8; Jn 18:33-37)

Jesus tells Pilate, “*My kingdom is not here [in the world]*” (Jn 18:36). Nevertheless, it exists in the world, among nations. “*Jesus Christ is... the ruler of the kings of the earth*” (Rv 1:5). “*Go, baptize all nations...*” (Mt 28:19). There are three important ways to understand the Kingship of Christ, and how his Kingdom is established, and the first of these is on the world stage, among nations.

It was not merely individuals that the apostles converted, but nations. The goal of the Church has always been to bring nations to Christ. The first earthly king to submit his crown to Christ was Tiridates, thus consecrating Armenia as the first Christian nation. The great prize was the Roman Empire in the fourth century, followed by many other nations throughout Europe and the Mideast.

In a Catholic country, the earthly monarch is a sacred person who rules in the name of Christ. A Catholic country is ordered by the Gospel, and toward the Kingdom of God. Whereas the institutional Church serves the Kingdom on the spiritual level, the governmental institution serves the Kingdom of God on the temporal level. Christianity imbues every dimension of the society: public calendar of holy days, work-week built around the Lord’s Day, economic and educational establishments, entertainment industry, laws governing marriage and family, and the care of the poor.

St. Stephen I (975-1038), who brought his nation of Hungary to Christ in 1000 A.D., established formally that the ruler of his nation was Jesus Christ, whose rule was symbolized by the national crown. He was astutely aware that as an earthly monarch, he was not the true ruler of Hungary, but only a temporary servant of the Crown, which was the true government of his land. Many monarchs from Catholic countries, embracing this principle, have been canonized or beatified as great saints: Helena of Constantinople, Louis of France, Alfred of England, Wenceslaus of Bohemia, Henry and Cunegunde of Germany, Ferdinand of Spain, Casimir of Poland, Olga of Russia, and the two “Charles” (Charlemagne and Karl of Austria) who served as the first and last of the Holy Roman Emperors.

Even though all the great Catholic nations have since been overthrown by atheistic revolutions and persecutions (French Revolution, Bolshevik Revolution, etc.), the feast of Christ the King was instituted in 1925 as a reminder of the truth once made explicit in Christendom: that the Kingdom of God is not simply a private affair of individuals, but the true goal of the Church among the nations on earth. Including for instance, the Church in the United States.

In the United States, which is not a monarchy and does not establish any official religion, Catholics have the obligation when voting, to advance the Kingdom of God, and not elect “anti-Christ” who curtail religious liberty, abolish morality, indoctrinate secularism in children, promote abortion and homosexuality, and uphold pagan festivals while denigrating Christian ones. Moreover, Catholics are encouraged to become those elected and appointed officials, and bring their faith with them. They must never betray Christ the King for the sake of politics, such as those false Catholics who promote abortion. We don’t necessarily have to establish a monarchy in this land, but we are obligated to bring this land under the dominion of Christ!

The second important way to understand the Kingship of Christ is in the family. A household is a dominion. Though our political influence may be limited, within their home Catholics have full authority, and therefore the ability, to establish the Kingdom of God. The sacrament of Matrimony anoints husband and wife to be king and queen of their domain, and serve the Kingdom in Christ’s name by establishing his law within their territory, just as St. Stephen and the great Catholic monarchs did in theirs. It is here in the household that newly baptized children experience from the earliest age the richness of God’s love, mercy, and justice. And not only the children who live there, but also visitors, friends, and neighbors. A nation is converted to Christ when the Kingdom of God is established in Christian households.

Finally, there is one other “dominion” where Christ’s kingship must be established and that is within one’s personal life, in one’s heart. All must be brought into subjection to Christ and ordered to his Kingdom: thoughts, decisions, desires, priorities. We must be loyal subjects and faithful soldiers, ready to fight the spiritual battles and conquer the enemies within which rebel against the Holy Spirit. Nations decay when families fall apart; and families are torn asunder when individuals fail to conquer sin.

In Baptism every Christian renounces the lordship of the devil and his kingdom of darkness into which we are born, and professes faith and allegiance to the Kingdom of God into which he passes. Baptism anoints every Christian to the priesthood and kingship of Christ, making them citizens of heaven bound to observe the covenantal obligations of a Christian life. Unlike the tyrant of the world who is cruel and speaks lies, Christ is a good king who lays down his life for his sheep to protect them, and always nourishes them in the truth. We must resist the lies and temptations by which the evil one tries to pull us back into slavery, and realize that loyalty to Christ demands sacrifice and ongoing spiritual warfare with the weakness of the flesh, with the sinful world, and with its evil ruler.

The goal of the Church's mission is the conversion of nations to Christ. But this takes place through families, and that requires individual conversion. When Christ's dominion is established in our lives – i.e. when “Jesus is Lord” – it is possible for our families to become strong and loving domains, safe places for children to grow in the wisdom and grace of God. And when families are firmly established in the Kingdom of God, the effect on the world around them will be immediate and profound. Others, seeing what the Kingdom of God “looks like,” a place of holiness and wisdom, love and justice, will desire to be part of it.

May Christ the King rule our hearts, keep our families safe, and transform our society according to the truth.