

## FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

Ever since 1925 when Pope Pius the eleventh created this feast, the Church has honored Christ as King of the universe on the last Sunday of the liturgical year.

After the horror of World War I and with the rise of the atheistic Soviet Union, Pope Pius wanted to enshrine our belief that Jesus Christ was the supreme King of the whole world.

As Christians, we are called to give our ultimate allegiance to the Kingdom of God which supersedes all temporal authorities.

As we conclude the Year B cycle of readings, we listen to the exchange between Jesus and Pilate from the Gospel according to John.

Pilate wants to know if Jesus is claiming to be the King of the Jews, which would be an offense punishable by death.

Jesus acknowledges that he has a kingdom, but describes it as a kingdom not belonging to this world.

Jesus then declares that he has come into the world to testify to the truth.

What is this truth?

Jesus summed it up when he said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life."

Jesus is the proof of this Divine Love as he offers up his life on the wood of the cross.

The cross was the only throne he accepted while on earth, and his only crown was a mocking wreath of thorns.

Jesus came as the Servant-King who washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to do the same.

Jesus is the Shepherd-King whose sheep recognize his voice and follow him as the way, the truth, and the life.

Today's reading from the Book of Revelation sums up this truth when it declares:

"To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, who has made us into a kingdom of priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen"

What an amazing vocation to which we have been called: to be a kingdom of priests!

We entered into this kingdom when we were baptized.

The Baptism of a baby is often called a "christening."

After being baptized with water, the crown of the baby's head is anointed with the Sacred Chrism.

Prior to the christening the priest or deacon says: "As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as a member of his Body, sharing everlasting life."

Thus, every Christian is called to share in Christ's priesthood by offering up prayer and sacrifice in union with his one perfect sacrifice.

We share in his role as prophet by proclaiming the truth of his Gospel both in word and in deed. And we share in his role as king by using our time, talents, and treasure to build up his kingdom on earth.

The anointing with Sacred Chrism is repeated at Confirmation when we receive the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

When I was young, it was customary to say that, through Confirmation, we were being commissioned as soldiers of Christ our King.

But we must always remember that his is a Kingdom of love, and the arms we bear in his name are mercy and service.

As we have heard throughout our reading of the Gospel of Mark these past months, to become great in the Kingdom of God one must become "the least of all and the servant of all."