

## Reflection for the Feast of Christ the King

*Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

Collect for Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

The Feast of Christ the King that we celebrate today is a relatively recent addition to the Liturgical Calendar. Pope Pius XI instituted this Feast in 1925 with his encyclical *Quas Primas* (In the First), and the Feast was first celebrated on October 31, 1926. Due to concern about a growing secularism and nationalism in the world Pope Pius XI instituted the Feast of Christ the King to remind all of us of the universal nature of our Lord and the connection that we have to one another due to the fact that we are all part of God's creation. Viewing Christ as the King of the Universe is not an idea that developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, rather this concept dates back to the start of Christianity and has its roots in the Jewish faith and the belief in the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

We can read from the works of St. Cyril of Alexandria who was born in 376 and died in 444 and was the Bishop of Alexandria Egypt. *“Christ has dominion over all creatures, by essence and by nature. His kingship is founded upon the hypostatic union, the Word of God as consubstantial with the Father, has all things in common with him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created.”* This quote from the works of St. Cyril helps us see that the Church throughout the ages has embraced Christ as King of the Universe and this Feast of Christ the King does not bring forth any new ideas but rather affirms what is already known to be true. The *Collect*, this Sunday at the start of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, affirms what St. Cyril wrote in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, *“Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe.”* Also Pope Francis at the Angelus Address on the Solemnity of Christ the King in 2015 stated, *“the kingdoms of this world at times are sustained by arrogance, rivalries and oppression; the reign of Christ is a Kingdom of Justice, Love and Peace.”*

The Feast of Christ the King since 1970 has been celebrated on the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year preceding the First Sunday of Advent. It was Pope Paul VI who set the current date for the celebration of this Feast in 1969. Before this change the Feast had been celebrated on the Sunday before the Feast of All Saints. Both placements of the Feast of Christ the King have a wonderful message. The original placement of the Feast before All Saints and All Souls Days, reminds us of the connection that we the followers of Christ have with our Lord the King of the Universe. We must first embrace our Lord, before we can follow Him in this world and in the next, just as the Saints and our loved ones have done. With Pope Paul VI moving the Feast to the last weekend of the Liturgical Year, right before we start the Advent Season we are reminded that embracing Christ the King of the Universe is not only one of the first things we must do, but it is one of the last things we must do. Pope Francis pointed out in his Angelus Address on the Feast of Christ the King in 2015, that it is with Christ as the King of the Universe that there is Justice, Love and Peace.

The Feast of Christ the King on the last Sunday of the Liturgical Year reminds us that opening our hearts to Christ to be the King of our Universe we are opening our hearts to Justice, Love and Peace. As a follower of Christ, as a true believer in the Son of God we accept the centrality of Jesus Christ in all aspects of our lives and the centrality of Jesus in the world that God the Father has created. With the Feast of Christ the King as individuals and as a people we, are invited to embrace Christ as central to our lives and to the world we live in and by doing this we allow Justice, Love and Peace to be central to all aspect of our lives.