

There's but one King, who governs all, and lives forever!

There's a beautiful Hymn that the Church all around the world will pray today to begin Morning Prayer as we celebrate the great Solemnity of **Christ the King**.

Hail, Redeemer, **King** divine!
Priest and Lamb, the throne is thine;
King whose reign shall never cease,
Prince of everlasting peace.

Angels, saints, and nations sing:
“Praised be Jesus Christ, our **King**;
Lord of earth and sky and sea,
King of love on Calvary.”

Christ, thou **King** of truth and might,
Be to us eternal light,
Till in peace each nation rings
With thy praises, **King** of kings.

This **short little hymn** announces **three attributes of Jesus**
that we celebrate today in this **Solemnity of Christ the King**.

First, **His title is King ... announced 6 times ... twice in each** of the **3 stanzas**.
Second, **His span of Kingship is vast, encompassing** all nations, earth and sea & sky.
Third, **His duration of Kingship is unending, it is a reign that will never end**.

This little Hymn summarizes **the understanding**
that **the first Christians** had after the Resurrection.

They knew that now... there was a new King ... not just of Jerusalem ...
but of all nations!
and **they** saw it as their job to announce this truth ... to the whole world!

And **just as** people **today** go to **big cities** like **New York** or **Chicago** or **Los Angeles**
to spread big news, the **early Christians** went to big cities around the Mediterranean

St. Peter and **St. Paul** went **many places ... and both ended up in Rome**,
the center of **culture** and **civilization** at the time of Christ.

Everywhere they went they spoke of Christ's Kingship ... that He is the Lord of all,
and **for that** they were both killed
Peter by crucifixion in **65 AD** and **Paul** by beheading in **67 AD**.

A few years later, in 70 AD, the Romans went & destroyed the city of **Jerusalem!**

And **when they got back to Rome**, they built a **huge stone structure** to commemorate their **destruction of Jerusalem** ... it's known as the **Arch of Titus**.

An image on the side of the stone arch shows **Roman Soldiers** carrying the **Jewish menorah candelabra** out of the **Temple** ... to show that **their victory brought** the **end of the Jewish religion** ... and the **end of the God of Israel**.

Well, that wasn't the case.

While **their destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem** radically changed the way that **the Jews** would practice their religion ... it **in no way** eliminated the **God of Israel!**

And what they failed to see was that through **St. Peter and St. Paul**, who they had killed a few years before, **the God of Israel** had come to Rome ... and from Rome, God's Church would grow to encompass the **whole world**.

Peter & Paul were killed because they openly professed that "*Jesus Christ is Lord.*"

You see, for them to proclaim that in Rome ... those were **fighting words**. Because the **Romans** had **another saying**, namely, "*Caesar is lord!*"

The **Evangelist Mark**, who wrote his Gospel shortly after **the fall of Jerusalem**, also used seemingly subversive and revolutionary words that would challenge the **Roman authority**.

He opens his Gospel saying, "*The Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*"

We're so comfortable with **those words today** that we might not see how truly **antagonistic** they would have been to the Roman royalty.

They commonly used the words "**Good News**" to announce victory in battle ... and this *Good News* didn't have a thing to do with Caesar ... rather it had to do with someone Caesar put to death ... and now was claimed to be alive again!

Moreover, the title "*son of god*" was an **imperial title** that **the Romans** attached to **their King** ... **Caesar** was called *son of god*.

And **now Mark** was saying that not Caesar ... but **Jesus Christ** was *the Son of God!*

So those were fighting words ... and you may wonder **who won the struggle!**

Well ... fast forward 2000 years ... to a beautiful day in Rome, **April of 2005**, when newly elected, Pope Benedict XVI came out & waved to the people from the **balcony of St. Peters Basilica**.

Surrounding him were many of the Cardinals who had just elected him as Pope.

And standing at the edge of the balcony was **Cardinal George** (recently deceased) the **former Archbishop of Chicago** who the **TV cameras caught** peering out over the crowd with a very pensive look on his face.

When he got back to Chicago, **the reporters there** asked him,

“What were you thinking about as you looked out from the Balcony of St. Peter’s?”

Cardinal George said,

*“I was gazing over to the Palatine Hill where the Roman Emperors once reigned ...
and the Circus Maximus where they watched the persecutions of the Christians
... and I thought ... where are their successors now?”*

I wondered, “Where is the successor of Julius Caesar?”

Where is the successor of Marcus Aurelius?”

They’re not here!

“But if you want to see the successor of Peter,

he’s standing right next to me ... smiling and waving to the crowds!”

Wow! How powerful!

The **Coliseum** and the **Circus Maximus** are still standing in Rome ... **but in ruins**.

And **the leaders** who once reigned there **are gone** ... **no successors** are alive.

St. Peter’s Basilica is still standing in Rome ... the **largest church** in the world and a place of **great beauty** ... and there **on the balcony** ... stood the 264th Successor of Peter ... waving to the people!

The **Good News** of **St. Peter** and **St. Paul** is still true ... *Jesus Christ is Lord!*

That’s because one **JC** ... **Julius Caesar** ... is dead.

And another **JC** ... **Jesus Christ** ... is alive!

No one owes allegiance to a dead person.

It’s only to **Jesus Christ**, risen from the dead, that we owe **final allegiance**.

Fr. Robert Barron emphasizes this in his **DVD series** called “**Catholicism**”,

pointing out that **only Jesus Christ**

fulfilled the 4 tasks that were prophesized for **the Messiah**, namely:

1. He gathered the **Tribes**,
2. He cleansed the **Temple**,
3. He dealt with the **enemies of Israel**, and
4. He now reigns as **Lord of the Nations**.

It's that 4th accomplishment that we celebrate today in this feast of **Christ the King!**

This feast was established **just 90** years ago, in **1925**, by **Pope Pius XI ...** in his Encyclical *Quas Primas* stating that **the kingdom of Christ** embraces all mankind.

Pope Pius did this in response to **growing nationalism** and **secularism** around the world **that he** saw as strong opponents of the Church.

Sure enough, during the **early 20th Century**, in **Russia** and **Mexico** and **Germany** and **Italy** and **Japan**, **atheistic regimes** threatened not just the **Catholic Church ...** but **civilization itself ...** with **the whole world at war!**

Pope Pius' encyclical gave **Catholics** hope ... that while governments of men around them crumbled ... the **kingdom of Jesus Christ** would endure forever.

The Prophet, Daniel prophesized this truth in our passage proclaimed today, saying, "*His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away. His Kingship shall not be destroyed."*

2 weeks from now when we celebrate **the Feast of the Immaculate Conception**, we'll hear **Angel Gabriel** use similar words saying to Mary that **the son** she would bear would be named **Jesus**, the Son of the Most High, and that "*the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever and of His Kingdom there would be no end."*

Old Testament and **New ...** both declare the **permanent Kingship of Jesus**.

So there is a **King** a **Permanent King** of all the Nations.
He lives now and **forever**.
His name is **Jesus**.

You know, **we're** so comfortable thinking of **Jesus** as **the Good Shepherd ...**
picturing Him as King might be quite a shift.

But you see, **Jesus** is more than **just a gentle God** who picks up **lost sheep** and carries them home.

He is **the King** of earth and sea and sky. He is the King of all Nations.

And **what do people** owe to **their king?** **Allegiance** and **obedience**.

Pope Francis puts it this way

Jesus brought about His Kingdom through His closeness and tenderness towards us.

The Gospel teaches what Jesus' Kingdom requires of us:

It reminds us that closeness and tenderness are the rule of life for us also, and that on this basis we will be judged ... (namely) the **imitation of Jesus' works of mercy**.

The one who accomplishes these works shows he has welcomed Christ's sovereignty.

In the twilight of our life we will be judged on our love for, closeness to and tenderness towards our brothers and sisters.

Upon this will depend our entry into, or exclusion from, the Kingdom of God.

His Kingdom begins now – by **being close in concrete ways** to our brothers and sisters who ask for bread, clothing, acceptance, solidarity, catechesis.

If we truly love them, we will be willing to share with them **what is most precious** to us: **Jesus himself and His Gospel**.

Wow! **What wonderful wisdom from the 265th Successor of Peter!**

He's reminding us that we have a King, Jesus, who reigns now and forever.

And **our King** wants **all of us** to do what He does which is to build up the Kingdom through our **closeness and tenderness** towards others.

Are we doing that?

Are we obeying our King?

Now would be **a good time** to take stock of our lives because the day is coming where **the King** will come and separate the sheep from the goats ... and **only the sheep** will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

we affirm our belief in this truth each time we pray the Nicene Creed and say,

*“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead ...
and his kingdom will have no end.”*

Our country doesn't have a king ... **but we all have a king ... **Jesus Christ.****

there are **many nations** without a King ... **but there is a King** of all nations!

As we heard in our **Second Reading** from **Revelation**,
“Jesus is the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”

Yes, **Jesus is a King** ... the King of **Heaven and Earth.**
Our task, as His followers,
is to get ourselves and others ready for the coming of the kingdom.

We voice our commitment to this ... in **each Our Father** we pray, saying
“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.”

Today, let's **give thanks** that **God** gave us such a **great & mighty King**, His **only Son.**

Jesus is God. He is all powerful. He is ever-living and He leads us in truth to victory.
If we follow him, we'll never have to worry about who governs us on earth.

Let's pray for **the grace** to be obedient to **our King** and to follow Him as He leads us to His Kingdom that never ends.

As **Cardinal George** wondered,
“Where are the followers of Julius Caesar?” **No where!**

Earthly Kings will come and go, they always have and always will,
but Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, will live and reign forever and ever.

Where are the followers of **Jesus Christ?** **Right here! We** are his followers!

So let's follow Him ... to His **Eternal Kingdom** ... the **Kingdom of Heaven.**