



THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

St. Peter Catholic Church † Faith Fact † November 2015



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The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, is a modern celebration.

Pope Pius XI added it to the liturgical calendar in 1925, inspired to contradict the growing statism of Communist and Fascist movements that would give the civil authority pre-eminence over all human affairs.

Eight decades ago, in Germany, Bishop Johannes Schmidt preached on the Feast of Christ the King against the neo-pagan attempt of the National Socialists to replace the spiritual realm of the Church with a new social order based on racism and national interests. The Vatican Radio broadcast his “magnificent sermon” to Germany in German, including his comment that no state has a right to rewrite reality: “Twice two makes four, whether you are a Japanese, a German or an Eskimo. There is a truth common to all mankind, and every nation is but a different incarnation of the same truth about man.”

There are influences in our culture today that want Christ to abdicate his throne by having the Church abandon the truths of the Faith. There are also bolder attempts to overturn Christ’s kingship through judicial arrogance. Today, you can read their opinions in the newspapers as they say: “We have no king but Caesar.” It is a repetition of the moral arrogance that Pope Pius XI addressed, when governments attacked the sanctity of life through eugenics and social engineering.

Then as now, marriage was in the crosshairs, for if Caesar is to rule reality, he must be allowed to subvert natural law. This includes redefining marriage, the very core of civilization, an indissoluble bond between a man and a woman. It is significant that Pope Alexander III, who canonized St. Thomas Beckett, that defender of Christ the King against an earthly ruler, also issued some 400 decretals on the sanctity of marriage. Later attempts of the secretly married Protestant archbishop Cranmer to permit a system of divorce were not sanctioned for three centuries in English civil law. Even then, Lord Russell of Killowen lamented: “What was once a holy estate enduring for the joint lives of the spouses is steadily assuming the characteristics of a contract for a tenancy at will.”

Cultural sanity can only return with obedience to the Kingship of Christ, and no Congress, or Supreme Court, or Synod can contradict him without contradicting their own integrity. In 1970, Blessed Pope Paul VI happily changed the Feast of Christ the King to the climactic Sunday of the liturgical year, to declare to all the world that our Divine Sovereign “was and is and is to come.”

On the solemnity of Christ the King in 1997, Saint John Paul II said: “His was a shameful death, but it represents a confirmation of the Gospel proclamation of the kingdom of God. In the eyes of his enemies, that death should have been proof that all he had said and done was false: ‘He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him’ (Mt 27:42). He did not come down from the cross but, like the Good Shepherd, he gave his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:11). The confirmation of his royal power, however, came a little later when on the third day he rose from the dead, revealing himself as ‘the first-born of the dead’ (Rv 1:5).”

Catholic Education Resource Center: Father George William Rutler. “The Solemnity of Christ the King.” *From the Pastor* (November 23, 2014). <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/politics-and-the-church/the-solemnity-of-christ-the-king.html>.