



Homily for 10/27/2019

Christ the King, Ancient Form

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An Examination for the Church Militant

The first thing that I would like to address today is a concern that many have about the recent events in the Church: in particular, the grave confusion surrounding a certain image used in an apparent pseudo-religious ceremony at the recent Amazon Synod in Rome. I would like to take the opportunity to simply read the truths of the Catholic Faith contained in the Catechism in order to build up our faith in this moment of doubt.

From the Catechism we hear:

2112 The first commandment condemns polytheism. It requires man neither to believe in, nor to venerate, other divinities than the one true God. Scripture constantly recalls this rejection of "idols, [of] silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see." These empty idols make their worshippers empty: "Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them." God, however, is the "living God" who gives life and intervenes in history.

2113 Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature [mother earth, fertility] in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God.

2114 Human life finds its unity in the adoration of the one God. The commandment to worship the Lord alone integrates man and saves him from an endless disintegration. Idolatry is a perversion of man's innate religious sense. An idolater is someone who "transfers his indestructible notion of God to anything other than God."

This is the Catholic Faith. Now many have been rightly saddened and affected by the recent events that have sown the seeds of doubt. If you are aware of them and are looking for specific instruction and guidance, I would point you to the excellent open letter of Bishop Athanasius Schneider which I have posted on the parish's social media and which I recommend to you. But the greatest thing that we can do now is pray. In Cardinal Sarah's new book, "The Day is Now Far Spent", he quotes St. Alphonsus Liguori, who says, "the one who prays is saved, the one who does not pray is damned." He even says that "someone who no longer prays has already betrayed. . . is already walking on the path of Judas." This prayer must be humble prayer before the Lord. Cardinal Sarah gives us clear and solid advice during these times: **"Hold fast to doctrine! Hold fast to prayer!"**

It is also a wonderful providence that today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King in the traditional calendar. We have to remember that Christ has already conquered. He is already the King. If we belong to Christ, we are already on the winning team. But we have to be careful not to conflate Christ's Kingdom with our worldly political aspirations, as His Kingdom is not of this world. This is true even for politics within the Church. We rely on the Church Triumphant to intercede for us, but we have to recall that we are still laboring in the Lord's army in the Church Militant while here in this valley of tears. The tactics of the Divine military to which we were ascribed at our Baptism are wholly different than that of armed conflict on earth.

In the Postcommunion prayer for today we hear that "...we...glory to fight under the standard of Christ the King." What is His standard? A cross not a sword. He is a lamb; one who is slain. He takes hits. He turns the other cheek. He doesn't fight back with the power of the world. As Jesus himself says in today's Gospel: "If My



kingdom were of this world, my servants would strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: But My kingdom is not from here.” And this should be indicative of our tactics also -the supernatural tactics of faith, hope, and love.

In more concrete terms we are called to be joyful, welcoming, and evangelical – not filled with bitterness and resentment. Hatred and bitterness are not the Christian way. One major thing that we soldiers of Christ must be vigilant against is casting the first stone. We are quick to call out the errors of others and slow to examine our own actions and motivations. If we are to root out idolatry in the world today, it must start within. Come, let us bend the knee in worship. Here in the Mass we offer the greatest and most humble prayer. From the Secret of the Mass today we pray: “We offer Thee, O Lord, the victim of man’s reconciliation, that Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Whom we immolate in our present sacrifices, may Himself bestow on all nations the gifts of unity and peace.” We are so familiar with this notion of Mass as sacrifice that we gloss over the most humbling part. We have to kill our God in order to be reconciled with him, to gain the peace, that we could not gain on our own! That should humble us, not puff us up with pride.

On this Feast of Christ the King let’s do an examination of conscience in our own community. Before we call out the speck in our brother’s eye, let’s look at the plank in our own. If we’re not living the fruits of the spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control – then we may as well give up the fight, because we are working against Christ the Victor!

Now don’t think I’m saying these things because I hate tradition or despise those who love it. No, I say it as a father who wishes to discipline his children. A father disciplines his children because he loves them, and he expects more from them, and he wants them to grow in virtue. A tree must be pruned in order to bear fruit. This is our pruning.

To start with I ask you to walk with me in the themes I have mentioned in the past. Yes, we rightly promote the sacred tradition of the Catholic Faith here at Sts. Peter and Paul, but if we do it in the wrong way, we are as guilty as those who have done sacrilege within the Church. We are no better than the Pharisees who wash the outside of dishes but don’t take care of the inside. Woe to the Pharisees! The critique of Pharisaicalism is a legitimate critique that *we* should all receive with humility. We should be like the Apostles at the Last Supper, when Jesus says that one of you will betray me. It’s a good idea to say, “Is it I, Lord? Have I betrayed Jesus? Have I ever sold out the Gospel of Love for some high ideal and principle, at the expense of charity?” In these times of grave confusion from Church authorities, I see a dangerous assumption arising that, just because one loves the Latin Mass, there is no need for correction or direction. But many people have told me that they have tried to come to the Latin Mass, but they felt unwelcome and lost and no one reached out to them or greeted them so they never came back. My heart is moved by these lost sheep, and my desire is to create a culture that doesn’t drive people away. Now, I understand that when the Gospel is proclaimed, some will walk away and choose to go away. Walking away because of a rejection of the truth is one thing, and it is a reality we must accept as Christians and not be afraid of it. But driving people away is another thing entirely. People walking away because of scandalous behavior or lack of charity or an attitude of arrogance or superiority is on *us*. When that happens, *we* are responsible for depriving the lost sheep of the knowledge and experience and joy of the tradition that we enjoy.

From the Collect of today’s Mass, we pray: “Grant in thy mercy that all the families of nations, rent asunder by the wound of sin, may be subjected to His most gentle rule.” We’re *all* wounded. The first thing we need to do is stop wounding other people just because we’re wounded. I’m preaching as much to myself as to you. I apologize if I have wounded any of you by my strong words. I acknowledge that we have often been in the wilderness and have found in sacred tradition a refuge from the storm. But let’s not drive other people back out into the storm by our aloofness. There’s no rubric in the Latin Mass that says you have to be cold and uncaring. There is definitely no rule that says to whisper in charity or hospitality to a newcomer is a mortal sin. It’s not even a venial sin! In fact,



charity covers a multitude of sins. Our attitude coming into the Latin Mass is a legitimate subject for the examination of conscience. What our assumptions are about how we approach the Holy Sacrifice may need to be re-examined: if before we come to offer the sacrifice, we do not make peace with our brother, if there is a lost sheep we don't go after, if there is a soul that we don't search for . . . these are more important matters than that personal moment of quiet before Mass. In no way am I suggesting one should omit the due preparation before Mass, nor should we turn the church into a back-slapping confab. What I am saying is that shushing people and giving them an evil stare for asking where the Collect of the Mass is found is not the way to win souls for the Kingdom. Who will keep their eye open for the newcomer or someone who looks like they are struggling to keep up in Mass? Be your brother's keeper. Help them find the right page. Be a good neighbor, introduce yourself and ask to sit next to them. Cast the net into the deep and share your joy and enthusiasm for Mass. Sometimes all it takes is a smile. It is ok to risk seeming less pious to actually be more charitable.

We have to make this examination because things are getting worse, not better, for people of faith. The dark clouds are brewing on the horizon. And we have to get ready to be a refugee camp for those wounded by the world. We have to treat this Mass and this way of glorifying God as if it were the greatest gift that could be lost in a moment. But this shouldn't be in a defensive way, but rather we have to be focused on charity and humility and joy. The martyrs give us the example. We are not called to be activists for a cause, even if it is as noble as the Latin Mass. Activism is a modern error. Rather, we are called to be faithful; we have to let it bear the fruit of love and joy. We have to be careful about assuming that we are the Church Triumphant and living in a sort of triumphalism that is not in accord with our current state in this valley of tears. We are the Church Militant, and our weapons are the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity; and the greatest of these is charity.

We are not going to convince most people with rational arguments. We must convince them by the authenticity of the witness of our lives - *cor ad cor loquitur* - heart speaks to heart. They will know you are Christians by your love, not by your reasoned arguments why the Latin Mass is the better form of worshiping God. I see too many people ready to dismiss their neighbor because leading them to the truth is long and hard and means one may have to go out of a comfort zone. But God does not will the death of the sinner, rather He wills that he be converted and live. This should be our will also.

So on this Feast of Christ the King, let us make a sincere examination of the Church Militant. Let us bow down in humility and supplicate the God whom we immolate. Lord, have mercy on us, and on the whole world, and may your Sacred Heart and Head, so wounded by crown of thorns, ever reign in our lives here on earth. On that last day, when the trumpets of salvation blow, may your kindness and mercy allow us to be counted among your people in the everlasting Kingdom of Heaven.