

The Social Kingship of Christ: A doctrine no longer recognized

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On the liturgical calendar of the Traditional Roman Rite, the last Sunday of October is the Feast of Christ the King, which was established in 1925 by Pope Pius XI so “that the kingship of our Savior should be as widely as possible recognized and understood.” (*Quas Primas* 21) And yet, less than a century later, precious few doctrines are as *unrecognized* and *misunderstood* as the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the last Sunday before Advent, when the feast is (ostensibly) celebrated in *Novus Ordo* parishes throughout the world, unwitting faithful will largely be treated to such nonsense as: *The kingdom of Christ is not in this world. His kingship is a heavenly, not an earthly, reality. His reign is not of the temporal variety. His kingship is all about sovereignty over one’s soul.*

I know this from bitter experience as I used to be one of those unwitting people and have heard every single one of these untruths spoken from the pulpit. With this in mind, I offer the following exploration of Our Lord’s Kingship, which is taken from a presentation that I was pleased to deliver at the Catholic Identity Conference in 2014.

For most readers, the following essay will likely serve simply to reinforce a doctrine already familiar. Its greatest value, however, may lie in its ability to convey the true Faith to family members and friends who are unaware of Catholic doctrine concerning the Social Kingship of Christ - a truth that resonates immediately with all who genuinely love the Lord and His Church. With this in mind, please give special thought to who you might invite to read it.

Let us begin our reflection by making the opening verse of the well-known hymn, “Holy God we Praise Thy Name,” our prayer. You may even choose to sing it aloud:

**Holy God, we praise Thy Name;
Lord of all, we bow before Thee!
All on earth Thy scepter claim,
All in Heaven above adore Thee;
Infinite Thy vast domain,
Everlasting is Thy reign.**

Now, I can well imagine that as you either spoke or sang the verse, you probably did so as much from memory as anything. After all, the words are very familiar to every one of us, right?

It occurs to me, however, that when we say or sing very familiar words, even when we do so with great sincerity and truly from the heart, we sometimes fall a little short when it comes thinking about what those words actually mean on the deepest level.

In the present case, when was the last time you stopped to consider what it truly means to say that the reign of Christ the King is *everlasting*? Or, what it means to say that His domain is *vast* and indeed *infinite*?

More importantly we might ask, how does our faith in the Kingship of Christ influence the way in which we view the world and the way in which we engage with fellow Catholics and with unbelievers; in other words, how does this venerable doctrine inform our understanding of the role that we're called to play in the mission of the Holy Catholic Church?

These are the kinds of things we're going to consider in this reflection, and I'd like start in earnest with a passage from Sacred Scripture; one that is also comprised of very familiar words:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe everything whatsoever that I have commanded; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age. (Matthew 28:16-20)

These words from the Gospel according to St. Matthew contain what is often called the "Great Commission," the divine commission issued to the Holy Catholic Church by Jesus Christ, her Founder and her Head. Just like the words to the hymn that we prayed at the opening, this passage is perhaps just a little bit *too* familiar in the sense that we can recite it pretty much verbatim with very little effort.

And yet, apart from making a *concerted effort* to ponder this text very carefully to consider its deeper meaning, we are all but certain to overlook the substantial treasure that is contained therein; treasure that relates very directly to the topic at hand.

With this in mind, I'd like to invite you to examine this text very closely; to ponder its deeper meaning perhaps more deliberately than you have ever done so in the past, even to the point of focusing on individual words in the text that may initially appear incidental but that, in truth, are incredibly important.

As we proceed, a portion at a time, I think many readers may be surprised to discover just how much treasure awaits us in the text.

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them."



Looking down upon the Sea of Galilee

Just imagine looking out from above upon the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding area. The view was probably rather impressive. Even so, surely Our Lord's choice of location must have been more significant than that, and what might that significance be?

Well, for one, we see throughout Sacred Scripture that the mountain is not uncommonly that place *where God meets man*; not simply to engage in a private conversation, but to impart something of great importance for the whole of humanity unto salvation.

Most famously, perhaps, we see this in the Book of Exodus when Moses encountered the burning bush on Mt. Horeb.

We see it once again in the life of Moses when he received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai - places that scholars believe to be one and the same; a place referred to in other parts of Sacred Scripture as *the Mountain of God*.

We read about a theophany on a mountain yet again in 1 Kings 19 in a slightly different way when the Lord instructed Elijah, saying, "Go to the mount and stand before the Lord." You may recall that it was there on that mountain where Elijah heard the voice of God - not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a still small voice.

That still small voice sent Elijah forth to continue serving as a prophet of the God Most High such that he would one day be considered representative of all the prophets that heralded the coming of the Savior.

It is in this capacity that we find him yet again, this time in the New Testament, along with Moses, representative of the Law, at the Transfiguration - a magnificent manifestation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; one that took place yet again on a mountain, in this case, Mt. Tabor.

Indeed, the mountain is that place where the Creator of Heaven and Earth so often condescends to address His people, and so it is rather fitting, is it not, that Christ the King should issue the divine commission to His Church on a mountain.

Not just any mountain, however, but "a mountain in Galilee."

You see, some seven centuries earlier, the God of all creation revealed through the prophet Isaiah that it would be *in Galilee* that the light of Christ - the anointed one - would one day shine in such a way as to reveal that the Kingdom of the long awaited Messiah, the Son of David, constitutes a *reign that is everlasting*.

We read in Isaiah 9, once again, very familiar words:

In the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. (cf Isa 9:1-2)

A few verses later the prophet writes:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. (cf Isa 9:6-7)

St. Matthew, referring back to these words of the prophet Isaiah, tells us that this prophecy was initially fulfilled at the outset of Our Lord's public ministry:

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been arrested, He retreated to Galilee that what was spoken by the prophet might be fulfilled. (Mt. 4:12-13)

He goes on to say, "From that time Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the *Kingdom* of heaven is at hand.'" (Mt. 4:17)

It was there, St. Matthew tells us, walking by the Sea of Galilee that Jesus began calling His Apostles to Himself starting with the fishermen Simon, Andrew, James and John.

With all of this in mind, let us now turn our attention back to Matthew 28 and the scene of the Divine Commission:

There we find the disciples, on a mountain, a high place set apart for Divine encounter, having been *drawn there*, if you will, by Him who said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself."

As they look down upon the Sea of Galilee, surely Peter, Andrew, James and John are reminded of that moment some three years earlier when Our Lord first bid them to leave their nets and their boats behind saying "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men..."

And now, in the presence of the *Risen* Lord - Christ the King - they're about to find out *exactly what it means* to be fishers of men; the very purpose for which each and every one of them was called, as He came to them and said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

All authority; not just some, but *all*.

And yet how many times have we listened to our sacred pastors speak as if the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ pertains almost exclusively to matters purely spiritual and to things properly religious?

"*Oh*," they tell us, "*He said so Himself, 'My Kingdom is not of this world.'*"

Yes, but that's not all that Our Blessed Lord had to say about His Kingdom and His Kingship.

Let's take a closer look at what Our Lord had to say *in context* in the Gospel according to St. John:

Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from Hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou say that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. (John 18:36-37)

Some verses later we read:

Pilate therefore said to him: Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? Jesus answered: Thou should not have *any* power against me, unless it were given to thee from above. (John 19:10-11)

Read in context, what do we see?

First, we see that Jesus does not in any way deny that He is a King; on the contrary, *He confirms it* by confirming that He does indeed have a kingdom:

"My Kingdom is not *of* this world... My Kingdom it is not *from* Hence."

Pay close attention to what our Lord is doing here: He is simply referring to *the origins* of His Kingship; He is *not* commenting on its proper dominion.



Notice as well that when it comes to the mission that He would give to His Church, Jesus *does not* say that His servants will not strive in or do battle in this world. Indeed we must! He is simply making it known that we will fight not as the worldly do.

Rather, the servants of Christ the King will wage war with weaponry from Above; weaponry made available only to those who share in the Divine power.

And it is thus that St. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of *our* warfare are not carnal but mighty to God, unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God: and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ... (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

When St. Paul says that we do not war according to the flesh, he does not mean to imply that we have no battlefields here in the present order. We most certainly do.

Our Lord came to redeem *all of creation*; therefore, we can fully expect that among the fortifications that will be brought to heel by Christ are those *in this world*, and this will take place in some measure through the cooperation of those who willingly take up the mission that He gave to His Church.

Nowhere does Jesus suggest that His Kingly authority is such that He has no jurisdiction in this world. The very idea is preposterous. On the contrary; He lets it be known that His kingdom *is greater than this world*.

And lest there be any question as to where the civil authorities of this world stand in relation to Him, He even tells Pilate that the only reason he has any power whatsoever is that it has been given to him "from above."

This is a very clear indication of the duty that is incumbent upon *all earthly rulers* to honor, and worship and give glory to Him who alone is *from above*.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

All authority...

Where?

In Heaven and on Earth. This is a euphemism that means to say *everywhere*.

On this let us be perfectly clear: *There is no place, no person or thing that is not subject to the reign and the rule of Christ the King.*

At this, let's discuss this title, "Christ the King," for just a moment.

When we say "*Christ the King*," many today seem to think that we're invoking an honorific; a term of endearment born of Christian piety, as if it is little more than a title of esteem that we the faithful have bestowed upon the Lord.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

When we invoke "Christ the King," we are drawing, in part, from the great treasure that is contained in the passage from Matthew 28 under discussion here, wherein Our Lord speaks of His authority.

We are proclaiming the glorious truth that Our Lord has *all authority*, and therefore His Sovereignty concerns not just spiritual things in the heavenly realm, but also temporal things *right here on earth*.

And that is what moves the Church to speak of the *Social Kingship of Christ*.

At least the Church used to be so moved.

When is the last time you heard a sermon extolling the *Sovereign Rights of Christ the King in society*?

A better question for most Catholics might be, *Have you ever heard such preaching*?

In any case, it should be clear to everyone reading this text that the all-encompassing authority of Christ *and the title of King that goes with it* has never been ours to give, *nor is it ours to take away*.

Oh, we can fool ourselves into believing that it's OK to avoid the Social Kingship of Christ in our public witness, as the members of the sacred hierarchy have done for the last fifty years...

We can neglect to speak of the solemn obligation that all men have to serve Christ the King, *in particular those who wield civil authority*, as they likewise have failed to do for the last half a century...

But at the end of the day, guess what?

Christ is still King. He still reigns over society, and those in power are still subject to Him.

While this Kingship was certainly never ours to give, it most certainly was *given* to Christ.

This brings me to one of those individual words in Matthew 28 that merit our closest consideration: **"Given"**

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been *given* to me."

This tells us something very important about Christ the King, and also something very important about the mission that He gave to His Church.

For insight into the givenness of Christ's Kingship, we'll turn to Pope Pius XI and his very beautiful encyclical *Quas Primas*, by which he established the Feast of Christ the King in 1925.

The Holy Father tells us:

We cannot but see that the title and the power of King belongs to Christ *as man in the strict and proper sense*. For it is only as man that he may be said to have received from the Father "power and glory and a kingdom," since 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. (*Quas Primas* 7)

So, what exactly is the Holy Father saying?

He is telling us that the Eternal Word – the second Person of the Blessed Trinity - He through whom all things were made, has *always* possessed Kingly authority.

But to the God-man Jesus Christ, to the anointed one of God, has it been *given*. As such, it is right to recognize that Kingship belongs to Jesus Christ in *His sacred humanity*, "*as man, in the strict and proper sense*."

How does this understanding impact the way in which the Church thinks of her mission and the way in which she addresses the world? Or at least we might ask how it *should* affect the way in which the Church addresses the world?

For one thing, this knowledge should move us to make it known that those who deliberately withhold honor and worship from Jesus Christ cannot properly honor and worship God, *in truth*, as is every man's duty according to the first demand of justice.

Justice...

We hear this word an awful lot these days, especially during election season, but what exactly is it? At its most basic, justice is the rendering unto another what they are due, and there is a pecking order to justice; a hierarchy of the demands of justice wherein (*surprise!*) God comes first.

It's kind of like when we pay our bills. If money is tight, we're probably going to render unto the mortgage company before we pay the gym membership.

This only makes sense, right?

As a matter of justice, rendering unto to God the worship that is due to Him – not in any old way, but as He Himself has revealed that He desires to be worshipped, *albeit for our good*, this is the very first demand of justice.

This necessarily means giving worship to Him to whom "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given" by God.

So it is that the one true Church of Christ cannot content herself with simply encouraging non-Catholics to persist in a religion that simply acknowledges a Supreme Being. Much less can she do the same when it comes to the Muslims and the Jews who explicitly deny Christ the King who said:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded..."

Go where?

To all nations.

To do what?

To make disciples of them.

And what is a disciple?

The word “disciple” comes from the Latin *discipulus*; it is a pupil or someone who learns.

If we’re paying close attention to His words, therefore, we cannot help but see just how much the Lord wished to make it known that His would be a *teaching* Church.

Go make pupils... Go teach... Our Lord is essentially repeating Himself here just to make sure we get it. And yet, there are men in the Church today even to the highest places who like to promote this silly idea that the Church “grows by attraction,” as if she is somehow supposed bring believers unto salvation simply by the attractive power of good deeds, like moths drawn to a lantern.

This seems almost plausible until one considers that the heathens, the heretics, and even Our Blessed Lord’s avowed enemies are out there doing “good deeds” as well.

Which may very well be why the Lord did not say, *Go therefore and see how many random acts of kindness you can perform.*

No, He said *Go teach... Go make pupils ...*

Of whom?

Of the *nations*, and if that’s not peculiar enough, Our Lord commanded the eleven to “*baptize* the nations.”

Think about just how unusual this mission is.

Notice that Our Lord did *not* say, “Go into the various nations and make disciples of, and baptize, as many individual people who live there as possible...”

No, He said, *Go make disciples of, and baptize, the nations themselves.*

And yet we know that Baptism *is* conferred upon individual people, and that it is through Baptism that one is brought into the life of Christ and His Church.

And so what is Our Lord saying?

He’s saying: *Go, bring the nations themselves into the life of the Church. Instruct them in my ways, that they may reflect in their very ordering everything whatsoever that I commanded.*

Bring the nations into the life of the Church...

So much for the separation of Church and State!

With this in mind, let us ask:

Is it enough for our churchmen simply to hope and to pray that the baptized citizens of a given nation might in some way influence the affairs of State?

Of course not!

Our Lord made it clear that He desires more than this; He desires that the nations of the world should be brought into the life of the Holy Catholic Church and instructed in His ways.

This raises yet another question:

What precisely is a *nation*; in other words, what makes a nation *a nation*?

We might point to things like borders, currency, customs, language and so forth...

More fundamental than all of these, however, is the matter of *sovereignty*, so much so that we sometimes even speak of a “sovereign nation.” The two simply go together.

Every nation, regardless of its form of government has sovereignty, it also necessarily has a legitimate civil authority in place; be it a monarch, a dictator, a president, or what have you.

Notice, however, that Jesus did not suggest in any way that His disciples are to submit their cause to the civil authorities in the various nations.

This is noteworthy.

Remember, this is the same Jesus who willingly submitted to the legitimate civil authority vested in Pilate, recognizing as He did that it was given from above, and He tells us to do the same, “Render unto Caesar...”

So what’s going on here?

Well, He told us when He said:

“All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore...”

Here we come to another of those words that deserve our closest attention: *therefore*.

Jesus is essentially saying:

“*Because I am the King who reigns over all things, you have no need of anyone’s permission, not even the legitimate civil authorities need to give ascent to your mission. Just go, do as I say, for I have authority over them.*”

The importance of this one word “therefore” is simply this:

It makes a direct, inextricable connection between the mission of the Catholic Church and the Kingship of Christ.

If you take nothing else away from this reflection, please, make it this:

If Christ is not King; if Christ does not have a Social reign; if He does not possess Sovereign authority *even over matters temporal*, then the Church has no right to carry out the mission that was given to her as described in Matthew 28.

Indeed, we may even say that if Christ is not King in all of these ways, *then the Catholic Church has no legitimate mission at all*.

To imagine otherwise is kind of like me sending you on a mission to go into the kitchen of a local restaurant to instruct the staff on the kinds of ingredients they’re to obtain, how they’re to combine them, and the kinds of dishes they’re to offer on their menu, and so on...

Now, if I have no authority over that place and over the people who run its daily affairs, *then you have no legitimate mission*, much less a right to carry it out.

To continue the analogy, imagine that I just purchased the restaurant, and so I really *do* have authority over that place and the people who work there.

Now, imagine trying to carry out the mission that I’ve given to you, but rather than upset the people who run the restaurant, you decide to refrain from letting the staff know that you were sent on the authority of the guy who signs their paychecks.

How effective do you think you’re going to be in carrying out the mission that was given to you?

Well, if the approach taken by our churchmen over the last fifty years is any indication, we already know the answer; not very successful at all.

The simple truth is, Jesus Christ “signs the paychecks,” if you will, of every single ruler on earth whether they know it or not, and the reason so many don’t know it is because our churchmen have lost the wherewithal to tell them that Jesus Christ *is* King, and that He *does* have a Social reign, and that is what gives the Church her legitimate mission.

Her freedom to carry this mission out unencumbered comes directly from the King; not the U.S. Constitution or any other nation’s constitution.

It is for this reason that Pope Leo XIII could write in his encyclical, *Officio Sanctissimo*:

“The Church is a society eminently independent, and above all others...”

The Church is *eminently independent*. This means that she has no need of anyone’s permission – not the president, not the congress, not the United Nations – *no one* – in order to carry out the mission that Our Lord has given to her.

No other entity on earth can claim such freedom of operation as the Holy Catholic Church. *None*.

You wouldn’t know it, would you?

We tend to speak of religious freedom nowadays as something that belongs just as much to the Wiccans as it does to the Holy Catholic Church.

Not so. The freedom of the Church is eminent and “above all others,” and *no one* has the right impede her.

Now, some will say that this is an overblown notion of the Church’s freedom since only *Catholic* nations can be expected to recognize Christ the King and the Church that He established; much less, they will argue, can we expect non-Catholic nations to give heed to the mission that Christ gave to His Church.

The sure doctrine of the Holy Catholic Church says otherwise.

Quoting once again from *Quas Primas*, the Holy Father Pius XI states:

Thus the empire of our Redeemer embraces all men ... His empire includes not only Catholic nations, not only baptized persons ... but also all those who are *outside* the Christian faith; so that truly the whole of mankind is subject to the power of Jesus Christ. Nor is there any difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the State; for all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. (*Quas Primas* 18)

No room for confusion here, is there?

“Oh,” others will say, “*that was then. Such teaching was historically nuanced. The constitution of States in our day has changed; we cannot expect the nations of today to accede to the Kingship of Christ!*”

Oh, really? Again, we turn Pope Pius XI:

In view of the common teaching of the sacred books, the Catholic Church, which is the Kingdom of Christ on earth, destined to be spread among all men and all nations, should with every token of veneration salute her Author and Founder as King and Lord, and King of Kings. (*Quas Primas* 12)

Did you get that? Christ is *King of kings*. He rules over earthly rulers.

And what is His Kingdom on earth? It is none other than *the Holy Catholic Church*. And what is her Divine destiny? *To be spread among all men and all nations*.

Notice that the Holy Father makes no appeal whatsoever to historical circumstances; rather, he bases this teaching on nothing less authoritative than *the sacred books* – Holy Scripture – the very word of God! This is crucially important: As we’re discovering, Catholic doctrine concerning the Social Kingship of Christ and the eminent freedom of the Holy Catholic Church is founded entirely in *revealed truth*. This means that it cannot be changed and is ignored only at tremendous peril.

This brings us to yet another crucially important individual word found in Matthew 28; one that speaks further to the link that exists between the Church’s mission and the Kingship of Christ.

What did Jesus tell His Church to teach?

Everything whatsoever that He *commanded*; not taught, but *commanded!* Consider, by contrast, a school or an institution of higher learning. Do the professors or teachers offer instruction, or do they issue commandments? They teach and instruct, of course.

In issuing the divine commission, however, Jesus can refer to His teachings as *commandments* for the simple reason that He is the King - He who has all authority. His *every word*, therefore, no matter how gently spoken, is a *command* - a Royal command.

And what’s more, He declared that the nations are to “*observe*” the things they are taught by His Church; they are not simply to learn them or acknowledge them. This is significant. What kinds of things do we observe? We observe *laws*.

This means that Our Lord’s teachings – entrusted without error to the Holy Catholic Church alone - *are not optional*. It’s not within the purview of *any* man to encounter the doctrines of the Catholic Church and either *take ‘em or leave ‘em*. No, the doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church are nothing less than commandments; they are laws issued by the King who rules over every man and every nation. They apply to *everyone* without exception.

This means that no one has a God-given right to reject the Holy Catholic Faith, no more than anyone reading this text has the right to rob a bank; even less so, in fact. Sure, some people do rob banks, and others do reject the Holy Catholic Faith, but let us be clear on this point:

God does not grant to human beings the right to do either, He simply gives us the freewill that allows us to do evil, even if sometimes by mistake.



Pope Pius XI established the Feast of Christ the King, 11 December 1925

So, what does this say with respect to the mission of the Church, such as it is being carried out in our day, and how may it, God willing, be carried out more faithfully in the future?

How many times have you heard a priest, a bishop, or one of the post-conciliar popes talk about the right to religious freedom, as if God Himself has given mankind a right to practice whatever religion his conscience happens to embrace?

It seems that they never tire of doing so, but the idea that one has a God-given right to practice Islam, or Judaism (so-called), or Buddhism, or any other false religion has been condemned by the pre-conciliar popes numerous times. The matter is simply not up for debate.

We, and more specifically, those who preach in the name of the Church, need to recover the wherewithal to boldly proclaim, *in love*, that the doctrines of the Catholic Church are nothing less than the commandments of the King. And not just any King, but *Christ the King* - the same who willingly went to the Cross for us.

He is the most benevolent of Kings; a King who is, obviously, exceedingly patient. He also happens to be a King who will never leave us.

“And lo, I am with you always, even to the close of the age.”

It is right that we should take great comfort in these words of Our Blessed Lord. And yet, we must take care not to fall into the rather common trap of thinking of Jesus as Good Shepherd and Brother and Friend alone.

Yes, He is all of these things, but He is much more as well:

He is Christ the King; the Sovereign and Ruler before Whom every knee shall bend in Heaven and on Earth.

This is who said, “Lo, I am with you always...”

On the one hand, this means that our acts of reverence, the same that render unto Christ the honor and the glory that He is due as King, *even when done in secret*, are carried out as it were right before His very throne where He graciously accepts, blesses and rewards our faithfulness.

But it also means that when we as individuals, or as a society, or as a nation *ignore the Sovereignty of Christ*, presuming an autonomy that is not our own, these grave offenses against Christ the King take place right before His very throne as well, and make no mistake about it, even though He is patient and kind and slow to anger, Christ the King will render perfect justice one day, and absolutely nothing that takes place in His Kingdom will go unanswered.

This, my friends, should fill us with a sense of holy awe; with that healthy fear of the Lord that is a gift of the Holy Ghost.

Yes, Our Lord has promised to remain present with us even to the end of the age, and I would be remiss if I failed to mention the unique presence of Christ the King in the Person of Peter and his successors.

From about the 8th century all the way up to the 1960’s, the popes have worn the papal tiara or triregnum – a three-tiered crown - as a visible sign of the sovereignty that is vested in their exalted office as Vicars of Christ the King. Know this: Just as certainly as Christ is King, so too in a sense is the pope a king; he is the most eminent of monarchs among men.

As you may know, the papal tiara was retired by Paul VI, who at the close of the Second Vatican Council placed it on the altar at St. Peter’s and ordered that it be sold and the money given to the poor. And yet, just as the title of King has never been ours to give to Christ, nor ours to take away, the Kingship of the Roman Pontiffs and the monarchical nature of the Petrine Office can never truly be relinquished; it can only be downplayed, ignored, and treated as if subject to reform.

But only for so long... Reality has a way of pressing itself upon those who deny it. It’s really just a question of when.

If we are to recover our Catholic identity relative to the mission of the Church and her proper place in the world, the popes must once more embrace the reality of who they truly are, not by their own merits, but by virtue of the merits of Christ the King.

In conclusion, let’s take a closer look at just one more portion of the passage from Matthew’s Gospel; one that we’ve yet to address by asking: *Who was present there on that mountain in Galilee when Christ the King issued the Divine Commission?*

St. Matthew tells us it was “the eleven disciples.”

Judas the Betrayer was not there, but Thomas was – the same who had said, “I will not believe unless I can see with my very own eyes.”

Prior to that day, Thomas not only saw with his own eyes, he even placed his hand in the Lord’s side and his finger in the wounds of His hands and dropping to his knees he uttered that unforgettable profession of faith, *“My Lord and my God!”*

This means that on that mountain in Galilee that day were eleven good men, eleven holy men, eleven *Saints*. These were the very same men who would go about establishing the Holy Catholic Church throughout the known world, each of whom - save for St. John the Evangelist - would die a martyr’s death.

And yet, St. Matthew goes on to tell us something very interesting... He tells us, “Some doubted.” Not just one, but *some*.

In our day, not a week goes by that one of the bishops – the self-proclaimed Bishop of Rome chief among them – doesn’t give us good reason to believe that *none of them* still really and truly hold the Catholic faith in its fullness. It’s easy to become discouraged; it may even lead some among us, God forbid, to be tempted unto despair.

And yet, St. Matthew is telling us that among the very *first* bishops of the Holy Catholic Church - men who gazed upon the Risen Lord with their very own eyes, men who heard Him speak with their very own ears, and even had the opportunity to touch Him - even among them, *some doubted*.

There is a crisis in the Catholic Church today, make no mistake about it, and we do well to think of it as a Catholic identity crisis. We seem to have forgotten who we are. Many have forgotten who their King, their Queen, and their Mother truly is. It’s a crisis of mission, one that in many ways is unique in the history of the Church. All of this is true.

And yet, if we consider very carefully what St. Matthew is telling us here, it cannot help but lend a bit of hopeful perspective to what we’re going through, and perhaps even give us a greater understanding of *our own* place in the life of the Church at this time of crisis, and the role that we might play in seeing her move forward.

Yes, some among the eleven assembled on that mountain in Galilee doubted, but even more importantly, *others believed*. And if not for the belief of the others, you may not be reading this today.

When we survey the landscape in the Church today, what do we see?

Well, we have to say that that not only do *some* self-identified Catholics, including clergy, doubt, *many* doubt. In fact, one cannot help but to observe that *most* today doubt. They doubt the Kingship of Christ. They doubt the mission that He gave to His Church. They doubt the doctrines of our Holy Catholic faith in ways too numerous to number. *They doubt and they doubt and they doubt...*

And yet *you* believe, don't you?

I can just imagine a lot of nodding heads out there, and that's good, *very good*.

Because you need to know that even though most among us are not members of the hierarchy upon which we depend, our belief in the one true Faith - *if we persevere in it, defend it, and spread it as best we can* - by the grace of Almighty God, will in some way serve to pave the road upon which future generations may come to believe, just as the belief of those men on that mountain in Galilee brought us to this place.

And in those moments when doubt becomes almost unbearable, and you feel like you want to throw your hands up in the air and exclaim *why bother*, do not despair; rather, cling to your belief, hold fast to your belief, and seek refuge in your belief!

Not in retreat, but in *return* - a return to base camp - to be nourished and strengthened in the immutable Faith, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacraments; a place from which the true Christian Soldier can go forth into the world to *profess* and *proclaim* the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And though we know very well that this world that hated Him first will hate us as well, let us put on the armor of God and bravely go forward, committed to doing just as His Holiness Pope Pius XI instructed:

“While nations insult the beloved name of our Redeemer by suppressing all mention of it in their conferences and parliaments, we must all the more loudly proclaim His kingly dignity and power, all the more universally affirm His rights.” (*Quas Primas* 25)



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