

This feast of Christ the King was established by Pius XI in 1925 to focus attention on Jesus in a world which to him looked like it thought “Anything Goes.” That is, the pope hoped this feast would serve as an antidote to the secularism of his day. The twenties were in some ways a wild decade, the age of the flappers, the age after the slaughter of the First Great War in which a whole generation of youth had been wiped out.

2. Scripture scholars tell us that a similar history lies behind our second reading for today which is taken from the Book of Revelation and identifies Jesus as the ruler of the kings of the earth. The author of those words lived in the time of the Roman emperor Domitian who insisted that he be addressed as “Our Lord and our God.” So by calling Jesus the king or ruler of the earth’s kings our author was denying the emperor his title.

3. Today some people might say that this title is out of date because we have presidents and prime ministers and chancellors but very few kings, and the kings we have are often simply national symbols for their peoples rather than the source of actual power. Nevertheless, this title is given to Jesus by our Sacred

Scriptures, and so we cannot abandon it. Moreover, it is clear to all of us that the idea of a leader, of one person to stand at the head of the crowd, will never disappear from human minds and hearts. Even for nations like our own which identify the people themselves as the source of all power and which therefore call themselves democracies there is a need for leadership, even a leadership expressed in one person. Is it not fascinating to see how large a figure George Washington was at the birth of our democratic nation? Some would have accepted him as their new king. But he refused all signs of royalty. He would be called simply “Mr. President,” not “Your Majesty” or “Your Excellency” or any such royal title, and he stepped down after serving two terms in office. No, the need for a leader and, in that sense, a king, is native to the human heart. And certainly in that sense we want to affirm Jesus as our leader, our king.

4. But Jesus’ kingship involves even more than that. The world, according to our faith, has a direction. Its existence is not an accident. No, it comes from a creator who has a plan for it. Nor are people accidents. They too come from the same creator, and there is a plan for them too. Indeed, the two plans are one, because the world and humans are of one piece. We are the product of this world, but at the same time we are its stewards. Our relationship to

the world of nature is like that of grown-up children to their aged parents. The parents gave birth to these children, but now they are dependent on them for everything. So the world of nature gave birth to us, but now it is more and more in our hands.

5. And where are we and our world going? What is God's plan for us? God's plan is that we and our world end in a unified society characterized by justice, peace and love. We call this society the Kingdom of God. And the one who directs the unfolding of this plan is Jesus. Therefore, he is justly called its leader or king.

6. The Lord Jesus directs the unfolding of this plan both from inside and outside history. He directs it from inside because he is part of it, just as we are, because of his life here on earth and the community which he founded and left behind to continue his work. This is the church. But he also directs this process from outside, for he is already risen and therefore is now where we and the world will one day be—with God, in his kingdom of justice, peace and love. As the risen Lord standing already at the end of history, Jesus draws us and our histories to himself the way a magnet draws iron fibers to itself. Thus Jesus influences us and our world both from below and above, from the past and the future: from below and the past through his earthly life and the life of the church in history up

to now, and from above and the future as the risen one whose love flows down into us and our histories and constantly pulls us forward, attracting us to himself and to our goal, his kingdom.

7. The theory of evolution serves as the perfect canvas for understanding this plan of God because it teaches us that the world was born and developed and must come to an end. However, our faith's claim that this whole process finds its center in one man, the man Jesus of Nazareth, is staggering. But that is its claim. That is what we have just read in Revelation today. Let us read it again.

Yes, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

8. Inspired by such texts Frederick Handel wrote his magnificent Christmas oratorio with its glorious hymns of praise to Jesus as the center of creation, as the King of King and Lord of Lords, who will reign forever and ever. We cannot sing Handel's work today. We would need more practice for that. But we do have our own great doxology, that is, the praising of God, which we sing at the conclusion of our Eucharistic prayer. Therefore, today, let us do something different. We usually sing this doxology while sitting. Today let us stand when we sing it so that we can put more voice

into it. Let our voices will fill this church, praising the King of Kings on this, his feast.