

## CHRIST THE KING

Father Michael Gilligan, Ph. D.

**Gospel Theme:** Glory Hosanna to Jesus Christ Our Sovereign King. He is wisdom to the mighty, honor to the brave. To him be all glory, praise, and honor, glory, and praise by every tongue.

**Sermon:** Already, in our liturgy, we are thinking of the end of time. The themes of Advent are already present in our celebration, from the beginning of November, from the feast, of All Saints on November 1. At the end of time, at the end of the world, Jesus Christ will come again in glory, to reign forever and ever. Scripture bears witness to this fact: The Prophet Daniel foretold that the Messiah would receive “dominion, glory, and kingship.” In fact, says Daniel, “all peoples, nations and languages” will serve him. That prophecy is now fulfilled in the Catholic Church. In that single, great family around the world, people of every national and every language acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. They see him as king, as “robed in majesty.” They behold him even now, coming amid clouds. They know that his kingdom is near at hand.

How is it that Christ is King or Messiah, even today? We know that he will return at the end of time, but what does it mean to say that he is king in our generation? The answer is given by Christ himself, in his own words. In today’s Gospel, for once, Jesus explicitly says who he is. Christ says, “For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” The Book of Revelation calls him “the faithful witness.” In either case, the meaning is manifest.

Christ is among us, not primarily to be adored, to be worshiped, to be looked at, or to be admired. He makes no request for us to fall down at his feet, to kneel in his presence, or even to make him welcome, in rite or ritual. What Jesus Christ asks, first of all, is that we listen to him, that we learn from him, that we heed his teaching, that we follow his instruction, that we open our minds to his message. This is what he himself said, over and over again. When Martha was busy getting the house in order, Jesus said that her sister, Mary, “had chosen the better part,” namely, to sit before him and listen to his teaching. When Jesus stands before Pilate, he explicitly says his role in life, his mission from birth, is to witness to the truth, to teach. That is the very Gospel we heard today, proclaimed in your presence.

Why do Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland remain separated from each other? Why do Serbs and Croats continue to fight and squabble? Why do Poles and Russians not get along? Why did overwhelmingly Christian nations, such as France and Germany, go to war, not once but many times? Why did the United States have to have a Civil War, to get

rid of slavery? The reason, primarily, is that we have trouble learning from the teaching of Jesus Christ. We who follow Christ have in our, history often done a poor job of listening to him, of putting into effect his teachings of peace, of obedience, of reconciliation. We are too preoccupied with our own needs, our own ethnic identity, our own class concerns, even our own culture. All too often, we fail to escape what our own class concerns, even our own culture. All too often, we fail to escape what our own society proposes as normative. This is the constant ongoing challenge for Catholics for Protestants, and for Orthodox.

Let us pray, then, for Christian unity, centered in Jesus Christ. Let us pray that the false divisions we ourselves have created will be overcome. Let us pray that Christ will truly be King, truly Messiah, truly the one who brings us together.

**Closing Prayer:** God our Father, Master, Ancient One, you gave your Son dominion, glory and kingship. Listen to the petitions of your people. May your kingdom come and your will be done, through Christ our Lord.