

St Mary Abbots Eucharist

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 Revelation 1:4b-8 John 18:33-37

Father Christopher

'*My kingdom is not of this world.*' And yet we are also told to pray '*Thy kingdom come.*' This feast of Christ the King is, I think, fundamentally about the gap between the world as it is, and the world as it should be. And what our rather apocalyptic readings, about God's judgment on the world, are about, is that gap being revealed for all to see; and, I hope, our being able to do something to make the world just a little more as God intends it to be; to allow Christ to reign in our life and in the world we live in.

The word 'apocalypse' might make you think of fires and earthquakes, and of nightmarish films, but the word actually means 'revealing': so, for example, Roman Catholics call the book we call Revelation, the Apocalypse, but we mean the same thing. And this is what our two readings from Daniel and Revelation have in common with our gospel reading:

'*For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth,*' says Jesus.

Pilate responds, sadly just after the 'cut' at the end of this morning's passage: '*What is truth?*'

He does not say this as a proto-Left Bank philosopher, but as someone who doesn't care about truth. The forces of the world, neutral to revealing things as they really are, are contrasted with Jesus, in whose presence all is and will be revealed as it really is.

This feast of Christ the King is a recent one, one started by Pope Pius XI in 1925, and one which has unusually been adopted by most churches since – something which I think demonstrates how much we need it.

The Pope began this feast in an age in which fascism was a growing force, in which those who promised strength and domination were winning power across Europe. And he saw that this was a desperately anti-Christian movement. The worshipping of power and strength for their own sake is blasphemous; it is worshipping values which are the opposite of those of our faith. And they remain diametrically opposed to everything we stand for.

Perfect love casts out fear, and any politics, or views more generally, that use fear of the other; that are based on serving your own needs, or those of people like yourself or of any other limited group, whether defined by nationality, background, race or tribe, rather than those most in need, is anti-Christian.

We see it now, just as much as ever, in Belarus and Poland pushing refugees back and forth across their border to make a political point; forgetting that those men, women and children are made in the image of God. Are in fact Christ – '*just as you did not feed one of the least of these, you did not feed me.*' And one might add resisting action to limit climate change if you are living in the west: preferring wealth and continued prosperity for the few, rather than seeking to preserve the homes and livelihoods of the poorest in the world.

Any such selfish actions are to dethrone Christ. And Pope Pius saw that the reign of Christ as King was being obscured by the politics of his day. Such rulers and régimes rarely last for *too* long of course; the truth about them is normally revealed and overturned, eventually. But it is also *our* calling to live up to the values of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. For in the last day His values, those that we find in the person of the God-Man whom we live for, will be revealed as the only truth and power that matter. And all will be revealed in the light of Him.

True power lies in weakness and brokenness. God showed His power by making His Son needy, as a tiny, fragile baby; or, when older, in need of water to drink, as we encounter Him with the

Samaritan woman at the well; and, later, on the Cross. And this, despite being the true water Himself, with which we will never thirst. But in becoming human, He who provides all that we need, becomes one with those in need of food; in need of water to drink; in need of welcome and love; in need of clothing; in need of company; of our company, your company.

And in responding to that need, whether here or elsewhere in the world, not only is *our* faith revealed, but the reign of Christ. His power is different from earthly power, and yet it conquers it.

When you feel that tug of need from another, particularly from a stranger, it is not you acting is it? It is you being inspired by the Holy Spirit, and giving in to that power within you. Giving *in* to the power of serving another whom God has given you the gift of being able to help.

While judgment might seem to imply a battle between good and evil, that is not how it is at all. The goodness and love of God is the Truth, and is all-powerful. And when we respond to it, to Him, we are simply giving in to the love of God, letting it have its rightful place in our hearts; letting Jesus sit upon our hearts to reign there. And how does Jesus reign? Well, He reigns in the face of those who need our help; when we feel that tug to help, to let the grace and love of Christ flow through us, He is reigning through the power of those who have no earthly power;

He is reigning through the eyes of a refugee, desperate to feed her child on the shores of the Mediterranean; He is reigning through the look of a man sitting on the floor with his arms outstretched at any one of our major stations here in London. And when we see Jesus's face in the face of those whom we are given the opportunity to serve, we see our real master, and we find our real treasure. And the values of this world dissolve in that apocalypse, in that revelation. And we see the world as it truly is. As if in a vision. And it is a glorious vision. It is a vision of the world transformed, of *need* transformed, of reconciliation and healing.

A vision of the world as it *should* be, as it *can* be, as it will be. A vision of the world we pray for the coming of. A world we await with eager hearts as we turn towards Advent, yearning for the coming of our King, in the form of a weak, helpless baby, and as our judge. And with His coming, may His Kingdom come too. Amen