

Homily for the
SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING
November 20, 2005 Year A (10:30 AM Mass)

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Concerning the Hypocrisy and Danger of Secular Fundamentalism

“Above Him there was an inscription:
This is the king of the Jews...”

Today we are celebrating the *Solemnity of Christ the King*.¹

In thinking about what to say for this Sunday I realized that we are faced with a real challenge as modern-day Catholics when it comes to *recognizing* the Kingship of Christ in our lives. It would be easy to preach about how Christ must be the King of our hearts and that we should love Him above all else, and leave it at that. But the question is *how* do we manifest this recognition of Christ’s Kingship in concrete terms in our present situation? Is this just a quaint feast day for Catholics or does it have some serious and real life import?

When we say that Christ is *King* we mean that He is the Lord of Creation, of all things without exception. That’s what we mean, and that has consequences, or at least it should.

Saint John says that Jesus is “*The Prince of the Kings of the Earth*” (Rev.1:5), “*The King of Kings and Lord of Lords*” (Rev. 19:16). This means that Christ, as the High King, has rights and privileges over the potentates of this world. In other words, over the political order itself. We call this the “Social Reign of Christ the King.”

Certainly, not everyone recognizes this authority – that is no secret. But what matters for us, if we wish to retain any measure of self-respect, is that *we as Christians do recognize it*. In fact, that is an essential component of Christian Faith: the acknowledgement of the Social Reign of Christ the King.

¹ QUAS PRIMAS – POPE PIUS XI (DEC. 11, 1925).

Pius XI said that: “*If to Christ our Lord is given all power in heaven and on earth; if all men, purchased by His precious blood, are by a new right subjected to His dominion; if this power embraces all men, it must be clear that not one of our faculties is exempt from His empire.*”

This being said, we can see how *antithetical* it is to faith in Christ to lock Him away in the church between Sundays. And we can see how outrageous it is when people who call themselves Christ’s followers deny His very teachings when the time comes to put them into practice, as if those teachings were just oddities of a peculiar religious community that have nothing to do with real life.

So often we hear of Catholics who are all too willing to suppress their Catholicism to accommodate and for the sake of those who reject Christ. It is a bewildering phenomenon, because it is not unreasonable to expect people to act on their convictions. Why then, do so many Catholics, most notoriously Catholic politicians, refuse to act on their Catholic convictions?

My friends, we live in a society that is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity even as it chants the mantra of religious tolerance. It’s as if we’ve been lulled into inaction by this mantra.

I think that there is a real danger for Catholics to become disoriented in this milieu and to lose their spiritual bearings. We are in a pressure-cooker of sorts, which tends to produce in us viewpoints that run counter to authentic Faith in Christ.

I have had countless conversations with people who identify themselves as Catholics yet who speak more about what they *don’t* believe than about what do believe. But Christ never exalted *unbelief*. In fact He condemned it. Lack of faith is no virtue. Dissent from the Church’s teachings is not praiseworthy, it is condemnable. Jesus said: *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)*

It is almost as if many of our coreligionists have converted – wittingly or unwittingly - to *another* religion. For the sake of argument I’d like to call it “the religion of *secularism*.” This expression might at first seem to be an oxymoron, but a deeper analysis reveals that it in the end is not.

Secularism, on the surface, is the doctrine that seeks to exclude religious considerations from public life. It presents itself as being above the fray of interreligious controversy and purports to treat all religions as equal. It reduces religion to eccentric neighborhood social clubs and will not tolerate any real influence of religion in the public sphere. Secularism seeks to establish a society that has no reference to God - a

utopia for man without the irritating interference of religion. The hypocrisy of it however, lies in this: that secularism upholds its own stance towards religion as the overarching and indeed ultimate truth; the true path to peace and harmony among men.

In contrast, in his decree proclaiming the institution of this feast of Christ the King in 1925, Pope Pius XI said that, “*The thrusting aside of Jesus Christ from private and public life has brought deleterious consequences to the world and society [because] only Christ can bring true peace.*”

The point is that if God is erased, man is erased. God grounds all moral values and His immutable law protects His creatures from exploitation. If God is not God then man becomes God. In the absence of the worship of the Creator there arises the worship of the creature. When the true religion declines, false religions arise.

A jarring example of this is an incident which occurred last November when the British Royal Navy decided to give official recognition to the practice of *Satanism*. It seems that a naval technician named Chris Cramer, a self-proclaimed devil worshipper, had been granted permission to perform *satanic rituals* on his frigate. A Royal Navy spokesman was quoted as saying that the Navy is “an equal opportunity employer and we don’t stop anybody from having their own religious values.”²

This is what secularism – godless societies – lead to inexorably. At its heart it is an attack on the Truth about God and man and religion – which means that it is ultimately an attack on Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church.

The point is that you can’t simply pretend that God doesn’t exist or that man is not essentially a religious being. You can try, which is what secularism does, but all you end up with is more and more horrific distortions of man’s innate religious longings. Take God out and **someone** or **something** else quickly rushes in to fill the void.

And so what I contend is that we are being asked in fact to *abandon* our faith in Christ in our hearts, even as we will be allowed to pay Him empty homage with our lips.

In this climate only those Christians who have proven themselves to be *counterfeits* will be welcomed by the secularists, while Catholics who are steadfast in their fidelity to Our Lord’s Church will be greeted

² Consequences of De-Christianization, London: 13 Nov. 2004, Zenit News Service.

with howls of protest. It will only be the cleverest among us who will be able to run the gauntlet of the secular inquisitors.

Last fall this was made abundantly clear in Europe. An Italian politician named Rocco Buttiglione was nominated as *European Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs*, but he failed to survive the confirmation hearings of the European Parliament. Now Mr. Buttiglione is an accomplished jurist and philosopher who speaks six languages. But he is also a devout Catholic and was a personal friend of the late Pope John Paul II. He was described by a member of the confirmation committee as a “militant fundamentalist” *unfit* to protect the civil liberties of the EU. His crime: he said homosexual acts are sinful.³

And so the secular society accomodates satanists, but disqualifies the Catholic Rocco Buttiglione from public office for saying what everybody deep down knows is true.

That was in Europe, but the same is going on in America.

Prior to the confirmation hearings of John Roberts for the US Supreme Court this was made abundantly obvious. Judge Roberts is a practicing Catholic whose wife used to be the director of a national pro-life organization. Predictably, his nomination was met with the expected howls of protest. On August 7 on television’s “Meet the Press” former NYS governor Cuomo publicly warned the Senators tasked with confirming his nomination. He said they should ask him this question in the confirmation hearings: “*Are you going to say that because the pope says this or the Church says that you will do it no matter what?*”⁴

The message is that a Catholic who is truly a Catholic is unfit for office. This is religious bigotry.

But what was really disturbing is that Mario Cuomo presents himself as a Catholic. This is why I say that many of our coreligionists have in essence converted to another religion, the religion of secularism. They should be reminded of Jesus’ words: *Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I will acknowledge before My Father Who is in Heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in Heaven (Mt. 10:32-33).*

I can help but think in this regard of that movie “The Invasion of the Body Snatchers.” They seem on the outside to be Catholics but underneath they are really dangerous aliens bent on subjugating us.

³ The Economist, October 30 – November 5, 2004, pp. 56 and 60.

⁴ Catalyst: Journal of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights: “Judge Roberts Should be Treated Like Any Other Nominee,” p. 4.

So perhaps we should agree that fundamentalism is the problem, but call it more aptly, “secular fundamentalism.”

Now there certainly are many Catholics who did not prefer power to fidelity to Christ. One shining example is Hilaire Belloc, the great English historian and social commentator of the 20th century. In 1908 he ran for the British Parliament. The opposition, true to form, sought to scare away his potential supporters by raising the specter of Belloc’s manifest fidelity to the Catholic Church. At the first public appearance he made after this tactic against him was begun this is what he told the crowd before him: “*Gentlemen, I am a Catholic. As far as possible, I go to Mass every day. This [taking his beads out of his pocket] is a rosary. As far as possible, I kneel down and tell its beads every day. If you reject me on account of my religion, I shall thank God for having spared me the indignity of being your representative.*”⁵

The crowd sat astonished for a few moments and then broke out in applause, and Hilaire Belloc went on to win his parliamentary seat over and over again. Here was a man of integrity.

We need to have this unshakable confidence in the beauty and goodness of our Catholic Faith, because we are being offered the proposal to empty our personal worldview of all power to transform our own societies and adopt the dogmas and doctrines of godless secularism. For this reason I would say that we are being pressured to convert to another religion. As good and obedient servants to our secular masters we will be allowed to have our quaint Feast of Christ the King, we’ll be allowed to call ourselves Catholic - as long as we don’t really mean anything about it.

The hypocrisy of it all is that, those who see God as irrelevant do not abide by the same standard. They work day and night to change the world according to *their* personal worldviews. Supposedly these are the rules of the game, why don’t they apply to faithful Catholics?

The amazing thing is not so much that the *godless* do such things, but that some among our flock are *cooperating* with them. The godless are true to their principles, while we are in denial of ours. They have finagled countless Catholics into spiritually sterilizing themselves in the name of tolerance and fidelity to the allegedly higher principles of their secular religion. Many who go by the good name of Christian have actively participated in the establishment of an anti-Christian society, a society that is moving closer and closer to a full-scale persecution of our religion.

⁵ Joseph Pearce, Old Thunder: A Life of Hilaire Belloc, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), p. 104.

My friends, we are all “ambassadors of Christ the King.” We all represent Him to the world. But an ambassador must have credentials attesting to his competence and he must be known for his loyalty. Were an ambassador to be found *disloyal* he should be removed and perhaps even punished.

If an ambassador in his conscience comes to the realization that he can no longer represent the King, then it becomes a point of honor that he resign his commission. But an ambassador who continues to present himself as the King’s good servant while at the same time turns against the King’s cause is worthy of the contempt of other men.

My friends, Christ the King is truly God. This is not a figment of our religious imagination.

As professed Catholics – ambassadors of Christ the King we must live our lives – every aspect of our lives – in praiseworthy fidelity to Him. The good of the world and our own personal salvation depends upon it.

LAUDETUR IESUS CHRISTUS! NUNC ET SEMPER!