

# The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

## November 21, 2021

### Reading I – Daniel 7:13-14

As the visions during the night continued, I saw  
one like a Son of man coming,  
on the clouds of heaven;  
when he reached the Ancient One  
and was presented before him,  
the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship;  
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that shall not be taken away,  
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

**Daniel. 7:13-14.** As we learned last week, the Book of Daniel was completed in the second century BCE. It is written in apocalyptic language, which is highly symbolic, and at times, hard to decipher. The word “apocalypse” means to pull back the veil—in other words to reveal something that has been hidden.

Today’s passage is taken from the last half of the book, which contains visions of Daniel. While earthly kingdoms vie for power and don’t realize that God reigns over them all, this vision is of the Ancient One’s (God’s) throne room. Daniel sees someone like “a Son of man” coming on the clouds who is presented before the Ancient One. While this figure comes as a human being, some believe there is also a supernatural character about him. This section follows the terrifying vision of four beasts emerging from the sea, each one representing a different kingdom: a lion with eagle’s wings represents Babylon; a bear with ferocious jaws, the Medes; a winged leopard, Persia; a frightening horned beast with iron teeth, the Greek kingdoms. The fourth beast has ten horns and is described as ferocious and arrogant—worse than all the other beasts. An eleventh horn appears, and to make room for it, three of the other horns are pulled out by the roots. It had eyes like human eyes in it, and a mouth speaking arrogantly. This is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (reigned from 175-164 BCE) speaking haughtily. He’s the one who desecrated the altar of the temple in Jerusalem by sacrificing a pig to Zeus. He was ruthless in his attempts to suppress Judaism, and this brought about the Wars of the Maccabees. In chapter 7 of II Maccabees, we have the horrible story of a mother and her seven sons who were tortured and put to death because they refused to eat pork. The vision of the “throne room” is foretelling the victory over the four beasts (kingdoms) and the future everlasting kingdom of God. There are references to this vision in the Book of Revelation (5:11) in the New Testament.

Comments/Questions: With the recent discovery that China has weapons that we were previously unaware of, and Russia amassing troops at the border of the Ukraine again, we are reminded that we live in a state of uncertainty. In some of the populist leaders, we catch glimpses of ruthlessness—including some in our own country. As people of faith, we know that God is at the core of our lives and that ultimately God will be victorious. But are we heading into chaotic times, and what might we have in store for us before that victory is accomplished? Who is our “Daniel” having visions, pulling back the veil, to reveal the power of God?

This feast was Pope Pius XI's attempt to respond to the rise of secularization, atheism, and communism. It was an attempt to remind Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin that Christ was the ultimate ruler of the world. Instituted in 1925, what impact does it have in our world today, if any?

### **Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5**

**R. (1a) The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

The LORD is king, in splendor robed;

robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.

**R. The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

And he has made the world firm,

not to be moved.

Your throne stands firm from of old;

from everlasting you are, O LORD.

**R. The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;

holiness befits your house,

O LORD, for length of days.

**R. The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

### **Reading II – Revelation 1:5-8**

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness,

the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,

to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,

and every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him.

All the peoples of the earth will lament him.

Yes. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, " says the Lord God,

"the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

**Revelation 1:5-8.** Like Daniel, this book is written on the brink of a time of great chaos in the first century CE. It is written by a man named John (a Christian

prophet about whom we know very little), who was warning early Christians about great persecutions. While the emperor Domitian favored tightening up the practices of the cult of the emperor (who was considered divine), he died in 96 CE before enforcement of this cult led to some of the persecutions by successive emperors.

The resurrection of Jesus establishes him as the “ruler of the kings of the earth.” He has made “*us into a kingdom of priests.*” **Human beings are to mediate the presence of God to the world.** The Lord God says, “I am the **Alpha** and the **Omega**...the one who **was** and is to **come**, the **almighty**.” The two letters of the Greek alphabet, the first and the last, signify the beginning (creation) and the end (the final time).

This book is complex and would merit a separate study by itself. The passage chosen for the feast we celebrate this weekend is a proclamation that **the** faithful witness, Jesus, is established as the king of the world.

Comments/Questions: Have you ever thought of yourself as a priest, a mediator between human beings and God? The Second Vatican Council refers to the priesthood of all the baptized. After the Council, this idea was taught to remind us that it is not just the role of priests and religious to be holy, but rather, it is the role of all of us. This idea faded as clericalism “recaptured” the idea of the ordained being set apart. We might do well to bring it out of the shadows of the dominant theology that puts priests on pedestals into the mainstream of Christian living. Reminding us that the entire body of the faithful is permeated with the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Might this not open the door to freely discussing ordaining married men, as well as women? But importantly, all the baptized are to make the world holy.

### **Gospel – John 18:33b-37**

Pilate said to Jesus,

"Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?"

Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I?"

Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me.

What have you done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world.

If my kingdom did belong to this world,

my attendants would be fighting

to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.

But as it is, my kingdom is not here."

So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say I am a king.

For this I was born and for this I came into the world,

to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

**John 18:33b-37.** We have some familiarity with the Gospel of John and the picture of Jesus it gives us. Written some 60 to 70 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christian communities have moved beyond the baffling experience of their post-resurrection experiences of the man Jesus as Risen Lord. By the time that John is writing, he can speak plainly about the divinity of Jesus, and the Jesus he portrays knows who he is and can make statements such as, "The Father and I are one." He also states that no one takes his life from him; rather he, "lays it down and takes it up again" –unlike the more human portrayal of Jesus in Mark's gospel (written 30-40 years after the death and resurrection) who doesn't have that awareness. In today's passage, he responds to Pilate who questions his designation as **king** of the Jews (a threat to the Roman authority) and states that he is a king but not of the worldly type. His kingdom is not here. Then he states what is at the core of his mission here: "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Comments/Questions: We know why this passage was chosen for this feast of Christ as King. As followers of Jesus, how committed are we to the truth? The truth of who we are; the truth of what's happening between ourselves and others; the truth that we are called to speak to the world in which we live. We all know that the truth has become the victim of many in our world who seem to be creating their own world of reality: the people who believe that what one owns gives us worth; the politicians who bury the truth to maintain their elected positions and who have "drunk the Kool-Aid" of truth deniers or who follow conspiracy theories. Without truth there is no trust among us, and we become isolated, individuals who need refuge in our "tribe" for the false sense of security it provides. This leads to a conflicted and war-like world that reflects hell rather than the kingdom of Jesus. What are your thoughts on this?