

CHRIST THE KING

The years following the Great War of 1914-18 were years of trouble and turmoil. Many nations struggled to come to terms with the horrors that had befallen the world. Before long a further war erupted, driven by the expansionist will of Adolf Hitler, and so the 1920's and 1930's are known now as the "inter-war years". It was during this time of political upheaval, with old empires broken apart and new nations coming into being all over Europe, that Pope Pius XI published a letter to the whole Church and the whole world, to put before everyone the vital importance of Jesus as the ruler over all.

The year was 1925 and already dictators were flourishing in the shape of Benito Mussolini, and new forms of government in Soviet Russia, where first Lenin and then Stalin would rule with an iron fist. With the new nationalism there arose a new secularism, a world ruled without reference to God. The Pope felt the urgent need to speak to this changing world about the rule or reign of God over all human life. He wrote a letter, *Quas Primas*, which instituted the feast that we observe today, that of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

The feast today prompts us to think about the rule of the Lord in our personal life and in our public and social life. When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman governor was keen to find out if this man threatened his political position. "No", said Jesus, "I do not. My kingdom is not like that". "But you are a king, even so?" the governor asks. "Yes, I am", says Jesus. And the kingdom that he proclaims is the kingdom of truth, and that claim puts all of us on notice. "All who are on the side of truth listen to my voice", says the Lord.

If we look at the drama of Jesus before Pilate, we will see that truth comes very low down the list of priorities. Pilate deals in power, in armed force and in persuasion. So do the Jewish leaders. They lean on Pilate and in the end they threaten to report him to a higher authority, to Caesar, if he does not do their bidding. As for persecuting Jesus, they firmly believe they are in the right. They are the guardians of their holy religion, and this man has insulted the name of God, claiming to be God's equal. But no matter how often they invoke the name of God, the truth is that their real god is power and control. For Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day, read radical Islam in 2018. Perhaps there's more

than a whiff of the same in our own Church and in our own political institutions. Perhaps it is happening wherever there is self-indulgence, the misuse of authority and the pursuit of power.

Clearly “truth” is not to be found in the pursuit of power because the pursuit of power only leads to violence.

“I was born for this”, says Jesus, “I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth”. So what is the truth to which Jesus bears witness?

“Love one another as I have loved you”

“The greatest among you must be your servant”.

“Love your enemies and do good to those who persecute you.”

That last one might be the tough one, but we need to own it and work on it. Perhaps it just means that we don't repay indiscriminate violence with indiscriminate violence. The teaching of Jesus shows us that every human being is to be loved and honoured and respected. That those who are poor, most of all, need our attention and care. That is truth ! And only when our society lives by that truth will we mount a credible response to the untruth of selfishness, the misuse of authority and the pursuit of power. That is the “evangelisation” about which all the recent Popes have spoken – and **we** are called to be agents and proclaimers of that Gospel truth.

This way of life begins with a realisation of our own worth and value. We follow a Lord who was completely at home with himself as a person in this world. In knowing how much he is loved by his heavenly Father, in knowing the love of his parents here on earth, Jesus grew up into great maturity of life. What use is it to be a king if you are insecure and uncertain in yourself ? With confidence in this Lord, we can set out to follow in his way and to listen to his voice. Thus we will come to learn the truth about human dignity, and the truth will set us free.