God's Reigning

THE NEW SHOFAR

"Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about." Athanasius oAlexandria:

Jesus, Most Merciful King, Reign in our hearts.

The phrase **kingdom of God** occurs nearly eighty times in the canonical gospels, an indication of its importance in the teachings of Jesus. Well known as it is to us, what remains uncertain is the meaning of the phrase. Jesus did not provide us with a definition, preferring instead to explain the Kingdom in the form of parables.

Although Jesus spoke in Aramaic—a Semitic language similar to Hebrew—the New Testament gospels and letters were written in Greek, and in both of these languages the word for Kingdom and the expression **kingdom of God** in Greek and in Aramaic—**points to the ruling activity of God over all human social relationships.**

In the **Book of Revelation** chapter 4 we read *And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.* This is the way the Bible defines things and is about the closest we are going to come to discovering what Christ the King and the Kingdom of God means for us, why it is such a powerful image for us to use on our pilgrimages. Christ Jesus is not so much a King, but rather is the divine Son reigning in human history.

Today's Feast calls us to ponder what "reigns" in our lives

The other thing of importance to keep in mind is the origins of the Feast, why it was initiated in the first place, as it is a relatively modern celebration. While it is now celebrated by most denominations it was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925. In the aftermath of WWI, during the rise of Communism in Russia, the pope instituted the feast with his encyclical *Quas Primas.*

The feast was a response to the rise of secularisation, atheism, communism and godless philosophies encroaching on the way we live. While the world was increasingly telling Christians that they must compartmentalize their religion and give their highest allegiance to the government, our baptisms call upon us to follow a very different pathway, the Way of Jesus Christ. Pope Pius XI wrote regarding the feast:

> *"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. He must reign in our minds, which should assent with perfect submission and firm belief to revealed truths and to the doctrines of Christ. He must reign in our wills, which should obey the laws and precepts of God. He must reign in our hearts, which should spurn natural desires and love God above all things, and cleave to Him alone."* (*Quas Primas*, 33)

"While nations insult the beloved name of our Redeemer by suppressing all mention of it in their conferences and parliaments, we must all the more loudly proclaim His kingly dignity and power, all the more universally affirm His rights."

That document is as relevant and as powerful today as it was back then. Our world is no less hostile to Christ and to his disciples and every day in the press we read of the dire consequences of the blind pursuit of power and ambition resulting in the divisions, the fears and the frustrations that beset many of us. In the West at least, God has been pushed into the background, and our human and political decisions may without the blessings of divine grace. We need this feast more than ever.

This feast is directed towards us, to all who call ourselves Christ's disciples. As the document above points out, it is only when we fail to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our strength and all our mind do these individuals and forces contrary to the Gospel find a footing in our societies. When the faithful are reticent, are at odds with each other; when Christians talk Christ but live the opposite, then we are encouraging that which is contrary to Christ. However, we can all find comfort and encouragement in living under the rule of Jesus, the reign of the Heavenly Christ.

Revelation 17: 14 is a go-to message…*They will fight with the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them, **for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.*** We do not have to go into battle against these destructive philosophies and political forces on our own. It is by living in Christ, by submitting all we are and all we do to Jesus Christ that **the power of the Lamb** is released into our lives. The more faithful we are in the entirety of our lives, the more the world reaps the dividends of the kingdom of God.

God is as God does

In the Book of **Revelation19:17** we are told who this Christ, this reigning king truly is… *He has a name written on His cloak and on His thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords.* In Hebrew thought, having the name written on you in that way is a declaration of his true identity. When we gather around the Risen and Glorious Christ, as we do when we gather for worship, or to pray or reflect on the scriptures, we are in the presence of the ***Reigning*** King, the one whose dominion includes the entirety of our lives as well as the entirety of our universe. And all of this includes the forces of darkness and evil, over Satan and his minions.

The Bible, and particularly our New Testament, describes for us the meaning of Christ as King, and the kingdom he came to inaugurate. If we pause long enough in prayerful reflection we can understand the nature of God, the true meaning of Christ the King. It is by valuing his works in our lives and in the world. We understand who God is by celebrating what God does. What God does is who God is. Know his works, rejoice in them and we know God and rejoice in him.

As one year comes to an end, and we begin the season of Advent, this Feast is given to us as a call to reconciliation and healing. It asks us to ponder if we are going to change the way we live the Gospel mandates and our baptismal responsibilities. Will we commit ourselves to handing over all aspects of our lives to God, allow Christ the King to reign, keeping evil at bay and releasing a vast abundance of grace, a gift benefitting not just ourselves, but the world in which we live.