

Ecumenism and the Kingship of Christ

The summer has come and gone. Now autumn's winds and rains are upon us and the oaks stand naked against the chill. The cotton and tobacco have been harvested and the pumpkins are finding their way to children's windows and family ovens.

It is harvest time — time for the farmer to go inside and count his gains — time for all of us to begin to close the books on 1965 — time to prepare ourselves for the great American Feast of Thanksgiving.

Our Mother, the Church, is also an observer of the changing seasons. Her liturgical year is drawing to its close even more rapidly than the civil or calendar year. She too has reaped a harvest this year — a harvest of souls for her Spouse, and so, in keeping with the season, she is celebrating her own thanksgiving day. The Church calls it the Feast of Christ the King, and on this Sunday she wishes to recall and recapitulate all the mysteries and triumphs in the life of Christ which the Liturgy has commemorated during the year.

How fitting that we reverence Christ as our King! Think of the many titles He holds to our loyalty and obedience: it is He who made us; it is He who more wondrously re-made us as new men through His Passion, Death and Resurrection; and it is He who will judge us in the life to come. There are many facets to the glittering crown which rests upon Christ's brow. In the words of the special preface for this Sunday's Mass, His is a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace.

To some, however, the transition in which the Church is presently engaged signals the end of the kingdom. Ceremonies, attitudes, and points of view which we had come to look upon as irremediable have been abandoned seemingly overnight. Now, even the ancient law of fast and abstinence is the subject of reappraisal and revision! And what of the new relationship with our Protestant brethren. Isn't this turnabout a sure sign that the walls are crumbling?

The standard reply to such objections is that one must be able to distinguish between what is incidental and what is essential to the Faith. With regard to ecumenism, however, one must also be able to envision the kingdom of Christ as not limited to the visible, institutional Church, but as embracing the whole of Christendom. It is an article of the Catholic Faith that there is no salvation outside the Church, but the term "Church" in this context has always been interpreted in the broad sense so as to include all those who sincerely strive to accomplish God's will as they understand it.

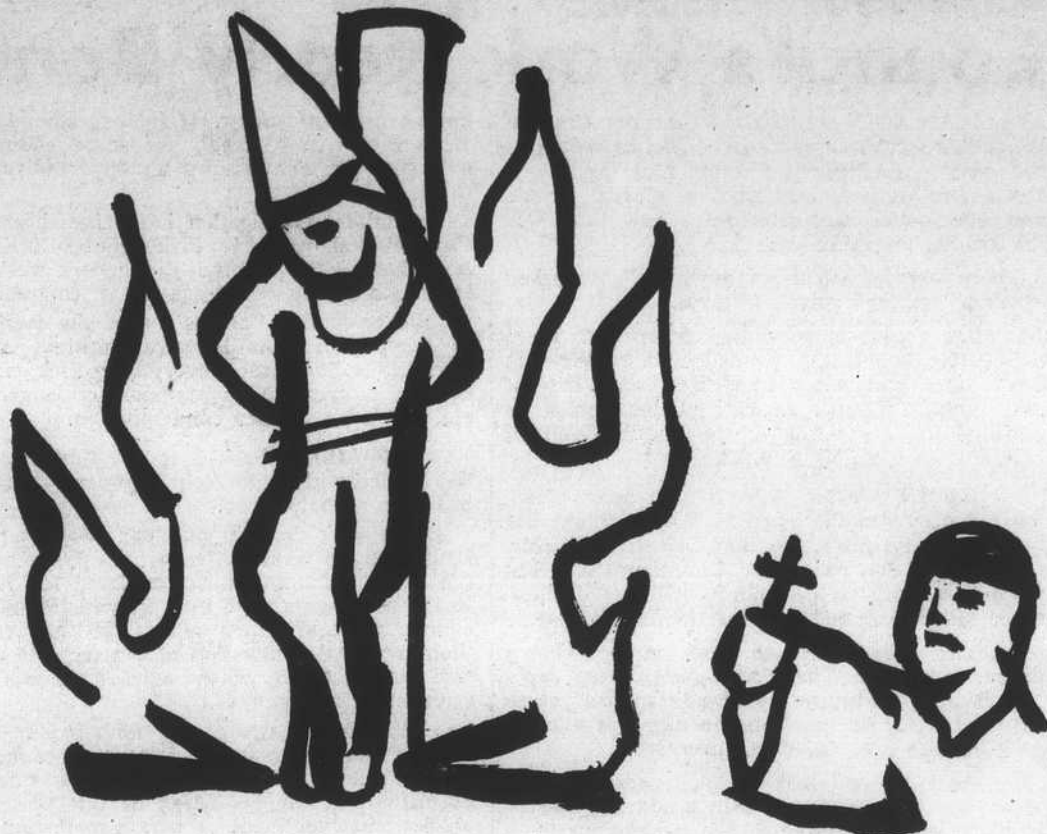
Surely, then, the kingdom of God as it exists on earth has broader boundaries than we can define. Surely our King looks favorably upon this new atmosphere which has settled upon His subjects. He is pleased with each fervent prayer for Christian unity, and showers His graces upon each attempt we make to understand our separated brethren. He knows all too well what sort of future awaits a kingdom which is divided against itself!

In this year, 1965, it appears that ecumenism has finally been adopted by Protestants and Catholics alike, not as a passing fad or as a trial balloon, but as a positive and permanent requirement of all their religious endeavors. For example, it is gratifying to learn that many Protestant preachers are preparing to deliver sermons on the theme of Christian unity this Sunday. The choice of this particular date is most meaningful, for in years gone by this was Reformation Sunday: an annual opportunity to belittle and beleaguer the Church of Rome.

The change in the Catholic mentality is strikingly manifested by a comparison of two articles. The first was a response to the objection that ecumenism was the cause of the recent decline in converts to Catholicism. Our Sunday Visitor took up the challenge and demonstrated that the areas of the country which had produced the most converts in recent years were identical with the areas which had been given ecumenical leadership.

In 1965, however, the state of the question was turned completely about. When the Paulist Press published its fourth volume in the "Concilium" series, the title given to the first article was "Mission: Obstacle or Stimulus to Ecumenism?". That very title reflects a mature Christian spirit and a recognition that ecumenism, having been willed by Christ and decreed by the Church, can no longer be treated as an adjunct to, or a by-product of essential Catholicism. We are beginning to realize that we are obliged to be ecumenical just as surely as we are obliged to worshipful or just or missionary.

If, then, the Feast of Christ the King can be considered as the ecclesiastical counterpart of Thanksgiving Day, it should be celebrated this year with special joy. The kingdom is not on the brink of disruption. Rather, at long last, it is headed in the direction of becoming whole again.



The Week in Liturgy

BY REV. PASCHAL BOLAND, O.S.B.

The Reign of Christ is Now

October 31

FEAST OF JESUS CHRIST, OUR KING (21st Sunday after Pentecost). The ancient covenant between God and man ceased with the Old Testament. A new accord, established by Christ, and written on the pages of the New Testament, opened the way for the reign of Christ.

This kingship of Christ was recognized by the three kings who traveled from the East, bearing royal gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh, to greet Him shortly after His birth. No longer was Almighty God to be worshipped in fear and trembling for His beloved Son was to establish a reign of love. As an infant Christ drew all hearts to Himself, as later He would draw them when lifted up to die on the cross for love of us.

Monday, Nov. 1

ALL SAINTS. The liturgical calendar of the Church is unable to include the names of all the saints. Many are recorded in the martyrologies. Still many more are known only in heaven.

The saints were once boys and girls, men and women, like ourselves. They faced the pleasant and the unpleasant realities of life. Baptism gave them, as it did to us, the divine impetus for saving their souls and becoming saints. Many died for the Faith as martyrs. Many more lived the Faith, professing it faithfully and daily until the end of their lives.

Tuesday, Nov. 2

REMEMBRANCE OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED. Yesterday we honored all the saints. Today we remember those who have gone before us and are on their way to heaven. Masses, prayers, and good works are needed to free them from the confines of Purgatory and their last suffering. Every priest may offer three Masses on this day: One for all the souls in Purgatory; another for the deceased that the Pope wishes prayed for; and the third for the deceased that the priest wishes to offer Mass for.

Wednesday, Nov. 3

MASS OF 21st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Christ taught that we should love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and body; and our fellowmen as ourselves. He illustrated this teaching by the parable of a king who forgave the debts that two different men owed him. One of these men had a fellow-worker who owed him a small debt and when he told him he was unable to pay it then, had him jailed. When the king heard of this hateful action he rescinded his own clemency to him and had him imprisoned. "This," said Christ, "is how My heavenly Father will deal with you unless you forgive your brother from your heart" (Gospel).

Thursday, Nov. 4

ST. CHARLES BORROMEIO. What the Council of Trent accomplished in the 16th century for the Church is credited to this mastermind, able diplomat, and indefatigable worker, and nephew of the reigning pope, Pius IV. Let us seek his intercession for the successful concluding of Vatican II, "Ever keep your Church, O Lord, under the protection of St. Charles" (Prayer of the Assembly).

Friday, Nov. 5

MASS OF 21st SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. St. Paul enumerates in ancient military phrases the weapons of attack and defense against the devil and his evil spirits: The belt of truth, the breast-plate of justice, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Word of God (1st Lesson).

Saturday, Nov. 6

MASS OF BLESSED VIRGIN MARY FOR SATURDAY. Last Sunday we honored Christ as King in the Liturgy. Today we honor His mother.

TAR ON MY HEELS

By Dale Francis

You can't please everybody, and when it comes to the Raleigh News and Observer apparently you can't please anybody.

An editorial in the Raleigh paper scolded the Vatican for absolving the Jews as a whole from any guilt for the crucifixion.

To understand this you have to realize that the Old Reliable isn't for blaming the Jews, they just don't think they needed to be absolved and they thought it presumptuous for the Council to do so.

Now there are a great many Catholics who agree with them, Catholics who never have blamed the Jews, who realize that Christ died for our sins and that it was our sins that drove the nails.

But there have been some who called the Jews "Christ-killers" and not only the majority of the Council wanted to lay to rest that lie once and for all but Jewish leaders wanted it done.

Actually anti-Semitism's roots weren't that simple. At least part of the walls of the Jewish ghetto were self-constructed by a people who have always maintained a separate entity. This was their right and by their religious conviction their necessity but it was also a part of the reason they stood off where they could be victimized by bigots.

The Council not only condemned anti-Semitism in the strongest terms but it made certain that no one could ever use the argument again that the Jews should suffer because of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. They didn't condemn "deicide" because it was theologically inaccurate to speak of the death of Christ as "deicide," but they did once and for all make clear to the world no blame should be placed on the Jews of all time because of what a few Jews and Romans did centuries ago.

That pleased almost everyone but, of course, it didn't please The Raleigh News and Observer. They have a knack of finding something to criticize.

NORTH CAROLINA CATHOLIC
The Weekly North Carolina Catholic newspaper of news and views
Served by N.C.W.C. News Service and NC Photos—Member of Catholic Press Association—Associate Member North Carolina Press Association, P.O. Box 9503, Raleigh, N.C.

(Incorporated under name of North Carolina Catholic Laymen's Association.) The North Carolina Catholic does not necessarily reflect official positions of this Association nor the official position of the Catholic Church in matters outside the field of faith and morals.

Entered as second class matter May 3, 1912 at the Post Office in Huntington, Indiana, U.S.A., under the act of March 3, 1897.
Entered at the Post Office in Huntington, Indiana, U.S.A., at the rate of postage provided for in Section 1103 of the United States Act of October 3, 1912 and of February 28, 1925.
Circulation office at Nazareth, telephone TEmple 3-5295.

Editor: Rev. Francis R. Moeslein, S.T.L.
Associate Editors: Rev. Roderick O'Connor, Rev. Ronald McLaughlin, Rev. Joseph Howze, Rev. Edward Sheridan, Rev. Robert Lawson, Rev. William Tefft, O.P.
Advertising: Mr. John F. Hogan
Subscription Rate: \$4.00 per year