15. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT
Day 26: "The Reign of Christ"

We are now more than halfway through our Lenten journey and are drawing closer and closer to Holy Week. The fourth Sunday of Lent is a Sunday of joy (*Laetare* in Latin). The priest may wear pink vestments to highlight the joyful nature of this day.

Today's Gospel (Jn 6:1–15) presents us with the well-known story of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes. The crowd had listened to Jesus' preaching, and at the end He wanted to feed them and show them God's providence and glory through this sign. This is what happened, and not only were they all satisfied, but there were also twelve baskets left over. The Gospel testifies that there were five thousand men (v. 10). This miracle was a reason for the people to praise Jesus as the expected prophet: *"This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world"* (v. 14). However, they drew the wrong conclusion, as Scripture suggests: *"Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself."* (v. 15)

Jesus did not come into the world to establish an earthly kingdom; rather, as He Himself would later testify before Pilate, His Kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:37). Nevertheless, He is the King, and in fact we celebrate the Solemnity of His Kingship in the Church.

To reflect on the Lord's Reign, today we will listen to some passages from Pope Pius XI's encyclical on the Feast of Christ the King, promulgated on December 11, 1925, under the title *Quas primas*.

The Pope begins by pointing out two essential points with which he introduces his circular letter:

1. The deepest cause of all the evils that have invaded the earth is the estrangement of men from Jesus Christ and His law.
2. The remedy is *"to seek the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ"* (n. 1).

Further on, Pius XI declares in his encyclical:

"It has long been a common custom to give to Christ the metaphorical title of 'King,' because of the high degree of perfection whereby he excels all creatures. So he is said to reign 'in the

hearts of men,' both by reason of the keenness of his intellect and the extent of his knowledge, and also because he is very truth, and it is from him that truth must be obediently received by all mankind. He reigns, too, in the wills of men, for in him the human will was perfectly and entirely obedient to the Holy Will of God, and further by his grace and inspiration he so subjects our free-will as to incite us to the most noble endeavors. He is King of hearts, too, by reason of his 'charity which exceedeth all knowledge.' And his mercy and kindness which draw all men to him, for never has it been known, nor will it ever be, that man be loved so much and so universally as Jesus Christ." (n. 7).

The Pope then quotes numerous passages from the Old Testament that predict the reign of Christ and then expounds on this doctrine based on the New Testament:

"This same doctrine of the Kingship of Christ, which we have found in the Old Testament, is even more clearly taught and confirmed in the New. The Archangel, announcing to the Virgin that she should bear a Son, says that 'the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end' (Lk 1:32–33). Moreover, Christ himself speaks of his own kingly authority: in his last discourse, speaking of the rewards and punishments that will be the eternal lot of the just and the damned; in his reply to the Roman magistrate, who asked him publicly whether he were a king or not; and after his resurrection, when giving to his Apostles the mission of teaching and baptizing all nations, he took the opportunity to call himself king (Mt 25:31–40), confirming the title publicly (Jn 18:37), and solemnly proclaimed that all power was given him in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). These words can only be taken to indicate the greatness of his power, the infinite extent of his kingdom. What wonder, then, that he whom St. John calls the 'prince of the kings of the earth' (Rev 1:5) appears in the Apostle's vision of the future as he who 'hath on his garment and on his thigh written "King of kings and Lord of lords!"' (ibid. 19:16). It is Christ whom the Father 'hath appointed heir of all things' (Heb 1:1); 'for he must reign until at the end of the world he hath put all his enemies under the feet of God and the Father' (1 Cor 15:25)." (nn. 10–11.)

Therefore, Our Lord Jesus Christ is King in the full sense of the word. His dominion not only encompasses the minds, wills, and hearts of the faithful, but everyone should also bear witness to His reign in the public sphere. This would bring true peace to humanity. Pope Pius XI rightly states in his encyclical:

"When once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony." (n. 19)

As I quote these moving words of the Pope, I find myself in Jerusalem, in the midst of a new war in the Middle East. As Israel is attacked by frequent missile launches from Iran and Hezbollah, and as Israel, allied with the United States, bombs Iran, I cannot help but think that none of this would be happening if men recognized the reign of Christ and followed Him. If the hearts of men submitted to the gentle rule of the Holy Spirit, the causes of war would be eradicated.

So I conclude today's meditation with one last quote from Pope Pius XI, whose encyclical has accompanied us on this Sunday of joy, and I join in his hope:

"If the kingdom of Christ, then, receives, as it should, all nations under its way, there seems no reason why we should despair of seeing that peace which the King of Peace came to bring on earth - he who came to reconcile all things (Col 1:20), who came not to be ministered unto but to minister (Mt 20:28), who, though Lord of all, gave himself to us as a model of humility, and with his principal law united the precept of charity; who said also: "My yoke is sweet and my burden light." (n. 20)

As the fruit of this meditation, we implore that the kingdom of Christ may spread throughout the earth.

Meditation on the Gospel of the Day (Part I):
https://en.elijamission.net/the-gospel-of-st-john-jn-91-12-the-healing-of-a-man-born-blind/
Meditation on the Gospel of the Day (Part II):
https://en.elijamission.net/the-gospel-of-st-john-jn-913-23-he-is-a-prophet/
Meditation on the Gospel of the Day (Part III):
https://en.elijamission.net/the-gospel-of-st-john-jn-924-41-the-blind-seethose-who-see-are-blinded/