

PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING 2014

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE STACK

Today is the final Sunday of the Church's year. The First Sunday of Advent begins a new year with the expectation and hope, which always mark new beginnings. The four Sundays of Advent are an invitation to us to prepare ourselves once more for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which we celebrate at Christmas.

Beginnings and endings are part of the rhythm and pattern of each of life. As we mark the times and seasons and the cycle of our own lives, it is good to look back and see how far we have journeyed in personally and as a community in the last year and look forward to what lies ahead. The English poet T.S. Eliot put it well when he wrote:

What we call the beginning is often the end.

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from.

We shall not cease from exploration.

And the end of our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

Today we keep the Feast of Christ the King. This Feast was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925 and was connected by him to the rise of secularism and non-Christian dictatorships in Europe. In affirming the Kingship of Christ, Pope Pius invited Christian people to put the values of the Kingdom of God at the centre of their lives. *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven".*

The challenge to put Jesus Christ at the heart of life is as real today as it was almost one hundred years ago.

“My kingdom is not of this world” Jesus replied to the question of Pontius Pilate: “So you are a King, then?” The model of Kingship shows is that of mercy and love. Those who believe in Him and acclaim Him as Christ the King are called to show the same qualities in their lives. This is the constant message of Pope Francis. The example of compassion, care for the poor and commitment to justice are all signs of God’s Kingdom being made present in our troubled world. They are the identity marks of the Church and of every follower of Jesus Christ.

King most holy, King of Truth,

Guide the lonely, Guide the youth;

Christ Thou King of glory bright

Be to us eternal light.

This well loved hymn to Christ the King will be sung in churches throughout the world today. The recent Synod on Marriage and Family Life held in Rome explored ways in which members of families, young and old, can be inspired, supported and guided to a closer relationship with each other and, through each other, with the God who creates and sustains the human family. It is no accident that today is also set aside as Youth Sunday. This is a day on which we can give thanks for the energy, joy and vigour of our young people and also discern ways in which we may continue to help them on their journey of faith.

Many initiatives exist in this Diocese for youngsters to develop the life of faith including our Catholic schools; the Catholic chaplaincies in our universities; the Youth 2000 retreats and the Welsh National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. On this Youth Sunday I wish to invite young people from the Diocese to join me at World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland in 2016. Pope Francis will host this

worldwide gathering inaugurated by Pope St. John Paul II. Places have already been booked for young people from the Diocese of Cardiff. Our seminarians are working hard to arrange a fruitful and life enhancing program for those who decide to come. I would ask parishes to think about nominating prospective pilgrims who can join in this extraordinary opportunity. St. David's Cathedral in Cardiff will this afternoon host a "Youth Event" for young people throughout the Diocese to "Come and See".

At the conclusion of the Eucharistic Prayer during Mass the priest says *"Through Him, and with Him and in Him, O God Almighty Father, all glory and honour is yours, for ever and ever. Amen"*. The second century saint, Irenaeus, wrote *"The Glory of God is humanity fully alive"*. Jesus Christ our Lord, our King, our Saviour and our Brother not only shows us what it means to be "fully alive" but enables us to be so.

With every blessing for the Advent Season and the new Liturgical Year,

+GEORGE STACK

ARCHBISHOP OF CARDIFF