

Missionary Commentary

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe
November 24, 2024

Sunday Readings

Daniel 7:13-14
Psalm 93:1-2, 5
Revelation 1:5-8
John 18:33-37

[USCCB Link to the Readings](#)

Christ: Our Crucified King

If asked what movie I have seen most frequently in my whole life, I would have to reply: *A Man for All Seasons*. This 1960s film was based on a striking play written by Robert Bolt. In explaining his choice of Thomas More for the drama, Bolt gave this rationale: “A man takes an oath only when he wants to commit himself quite exceptionally to the statement, when he wants to make an identity between the truth of it and his own virtue; he offers *himself* as a guarantee.”

Profound Vision. Thomas More was martyred in 1535 at age 57. Reflecting on More’s life, Bolt affirms that “a clear sense of the self can *only* crystallize around something transcendental.” Thomas More explains this radical self-awareness, faith and commitment to his daughter Margaret when she visits him in prison: “When a man takes an oath, Meg, he’s holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers *then*—he needn’t hope to find himself again. Some men aren’t capable of this, but I’d be loathe to think your father one of them.” Indeed, More exemplifies “a Christian saint, as a hero of selfhood.”

Christ the King Feast. Coming at the end of the liturgical year, this feast is a wonderful opportunity for reflection on the depth of our acceptance of Christ as our King, our Crucified King. Thomas More gave his answer—with his life. Jesus had truly become his King! In deep faith, More could even say to his executioner: “Friend, be not afraid of your office. You send me to God.”

More’s Example. I distinctly remember the 2010 visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United Kingdom. As an aside, I recall the vivid image of the Pope and Queen Elizabeth, standing side by side—both with full heads of white hair! One of the pope’s speeches was given in Westminster Hall; the trial of Saint Thomas More occurred in that very place; he was condemned to death for refusing to follow the rebellion of King Henry VIII against papal authority on divorce. Thomas More adhered to God and his personal conscience; his final words on the scaffold were: “The King’s good servant, but God’s first.”

next page

continued from previous page

More's Faith. More's convictions are vividly revealed in his letters from prison in the Tower of London; they manifest a deep devotion to the suffering Christ. For More, Christ was his suffering-crucified King. More is truly a "man for all seasons."

Our Prayer. Each day as we Christians say the Our Father, we pray: *Your Kingdom come!* And, what kind of kingdom do we work, pray, and *suffer* for? As stated so beautifully in the Preface of today's Mass, we ask God to establish "an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." O, crucified-risen Lord, may your kingdom come!

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Daniel 7:13-14 — In this reading from the prophet Daniel, written in the second century before Christ, we read about the consoling vision of a future reign of the "Ancient One" (a personification of the People of God) who is given glory and kingship forever.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 93:1-2, 5 — This psalm expresses in concrete language how the Lord is truly the King robed in majesty and seated on his secure throne.

Second Reading

Revelation 1:5-8 — Taken from the Book of Revelation, this reading pictures Christ who has redeemed us and will return at His Second Coming; note that Christ is called "the ruler of the kings of the earth."

Gospel

John 18:33-37 — Today's Gospel describes Jesus as King; note that he is king—even when on trial before Pilate. We are encouraged to be "committed to the truth" and to hear Jesus' voice.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, author of the recent books [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books – 2023) and [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#), commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II [1965-2025] (Faith Alive Books – 2024)

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