

HIS KINGDOM WILL HAVE NO END

Feast of Christ the King November 26, 1978

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17
1 Corinthians 15:20-26a, 28
Matthew 25:31-46

My dear sisters and brothers.

We are at the end of the Liturgical year and on this last Sunday the liturgy is dedicated to Christ the King. This feast of Christ the King, which was previously celebrated on the last Sunday in October, has been placed more logically in this position and can be seen as a beautiful crown on the whole Liturgical Year.

This mystery of Christ has been unfolding before us since the time of Advent --- the time that prepares us to receive the child Jesus who grows and at the time of the Epiphany is presented to us as one who is adored by the Magi from the East. Jesus continued to mature until he reached the age when he was able to carry the cross on his shoulders. During the time of Lent humanity is called to enter into solidarity with him so that they might be redeemed by him. Jesus dies on the cross but is raised up to new life. Easter, which continues for fifty days during the liturgical calendar, is the sun that illuminates the whole liturgy of the Church. When we come to Mass on Sunday we celebrate a "little Easter." Each Sunday is Easter. Each Sunday is an encounter with the living, eternal One. Jesus said that it was necessary to leave because his physical presence in the world had become a hindrance (1). On the other hand, seated at the right hand of the Father (a Biblical expression that means that Jesus participates in the power and the glory of God) he sends his Spirit from heaven. We celebrated the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of redemption, the Spirit of repentance for sin, the heroic Spirit of the martyrs, Christians, and priests, and the Spirit of all those who have been chosen and who now form the People of God. This People of God is nourished by the Spirit who is the presence of the living Christ, alive, risen, and proclaiming hope to humanity. All the previous Sunday celebrations culminate with the feast and celebration of this last Sunday. This mystery of Christ is celebrated throughout the year and today is summed up and highlighted in the figure of a person who is called Christ, the King.

It is wonderful how Christ the King is immortal throughout the ages and alive in the concrete history of each and every people. I am happy to find the thoughts of Christ enfleshed during these days in the homily that the Pope proclaimed when he took possession of Saint John Lateran and presented himself to the people of Rome as their bishop. He reminded people of the long history of Rome that goes back to the origins of Christianity. He called to mind the origin of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran which is dedicated to the Precursor, John the Baptist, and reminded people that all the ancient Biblical history that is contained within the walls of that building is not there as artifacts in a museum but rather is a

living history. The new bishop of Rome came to frame this long tradition for men and women of today. He spoke to the people and said: *In the framework of this marvelous meeting of the old and the new, I wish today, as the new Bishop of Rome, to begin my ministry to the People of God of this City and of this Diocese, which became, because of Saint Peter, the first in the large family of the Church, in the family of the sister-dioceses*¹. He spoke about concrete events that he had experienced as a man who was living in 1978 even though he realized that he was linked to a history that was centuries old and that went back to the time of Saint John the Baptist. He said: *With what joy, and at the same time with what gratitude I have recently followed the numerous episodes (television brought them close to me) in which, owing to lack of personnel in the hospitals, so many persons, adults and in particular young people, offered themselves as volunteers to serve the sick with care. If pursuit of justice is valid in professional life, social love must be all the more vigilant. I wish, therefore, for my new Diocese, for Rome, this love that Christ willed for his disciples. Love constructs: only love constructs!*².

I tell you that I find great satisfaction in seeing this compatibility with what I, in my smallness, have tried to be here for the beloved Archdiocese. I also feel connected to my predecessors, Bishop Chávez, Bishop Belloso, Bishop Pérez y Aguilar and I do not need anyone to tell me who is better than I. What I need are people who are willing to help me to live this present moment. The Church is not simply memories or a mirror that is always looking back. The Church is moving forward and needs new perspectives. We give thanks that an ancient tradition has brought us to this moment in which we can see that there are people of great faith. Blessed be our ancestors! Let us also know how to be women and men who live the present moment and know how to reflect on what occurs during the week and during this present moment. Many people do not want us to put our fingers on open wounds and do not want us to analyze the present situation. These people prefer to live in museums, in memories, and compare us to the bishops of former times. The Pope spoke about his present experience and each week I want to speak about the situation in which we live.

Life of the Church

Therefore, my beloved sisters and brothers, during this last week of the Liturgical Year I cannot separate myself from the present reality. Indeed this celebration of Christ the King reminds me of a beautiful memory of priesthood: how many priests were ordained on the feast of Christ the King when this feast was celebrated on the last Sunday of October (a feast that has been transferred to the present date)? Yesterday I spoke with a young Salesian who told me: *three of us were ordained on the feast of Christ the King: Héctor Joaquín Mejía, German Escamilla, and Napoleón Mejía.*

We could also speak about many other memories of Christ the King that have been lived in our towns and communities and organizations in which people have shown their love for the Lord. This week I want to give thanks to God and also call to mind some events concerning religious life in our diocese. I spoke about the Salesians because during this past week many of them have come to Ayagualo from different parts of Central America. I greet them and thank them for all the good that they do for our people. May the spirit of Don Bosco enable you to continue to do much good among our young women and men and among our married couples!

I had the pleasure of greeting the Mother General of the Passionists who minister here in the schools of Divina Providencia, and El Santa Gema de Santiago de María and also help us

in direct pastoral ministry in the town of San José Villanueva where today the people are celebrating their patronal feast. Because this town has been the victim of a sacrilegious robbery, this celebration was suspended. There the Sisters and the pastor have organized acts of protest and atonement because this robbery seems to be something more than a simple theft³.

I also rejoice with you, the laity. Last Sunday we had a gathering of representatives of the laity. I told them: *you are the greatest people in the Church. You are neither religious nor priests but you fill the world and the world depends upon you in order to be sanctified. Indeed you sanctify the world through your marriage, your profession, your business, your work in the market, and your everyday work.* Thanks be to God that this spirit of lay spirituality is becoming more deeply rooted in the consciousness of the laity!

With regard to the laity we want to greet the members of the National Ultreya of the Cursillos who are gathered together in Guatemala. Representatives from our Archdiocese brought my message to this meeting. I want to tell them that we do not want methodologies or a religiosity that is alienating and not incarnated in the present reality. Rather we desire this wonderful methodology that develops Christianity in people today --- this methodology that is called the Christian Cursillo. May they continue to develop new women and men who will transform the Latin American continent from a land of paganism to a land of Christianity and may this Ultreya that brings together Cursillistas not only from Guatemala but from the other countries of Latin American experience success in their work.

In this same line of thought I also want to announce to you now that on Sunday, December 17th, the laity are planning a meeting of the Lay Movements and the Ecclesial Base Communities. There are many of these in our diocese and I invite those who do not belong to any movement or Base Community to try to come to know and live this reality because Christianity is lived in this relationship of friendship and community that is called Christian community.

When I was visiting the communities this week, I brought the greetings of the Archdiocese to the Queen of Peace on Monday, November 20th. I wanted to celebrate an intimate and private Mass at the feet of the Virgin and Bishop Rivera accompanied me. Thus these two dioceses, represented by their respective bishop were able to offer a true and sincere homage to the Virgin, the patroness of El Salvador.

Last Sunday I was in Chiltiupán and I want to greet the Dominican Sisters and Father Benjamín Rodríguez because that beautiful and scenic area (I believe many of you are unaware of this place which has a beautiful view of the sea on the horizon) greatly encourages the religious and community spirit that the pastoral activity is planting there.

I also participated in the planning and the pastoral studies that took place in the Vicariate of Soyapango. Yesterday I experienced a great joy in the parish of María Auxiliadora in the village of Renancingo where I confirmed a group of young women and men. I want to highlight the meaning that the young people gave to this celebration. A young woman said to me in her welcoming discourse: *Allow us, young women and men, to greet you as a good friend.* I told them: *I have never heard more beautiful words and I want to be your friend. It pains me that in these regions there are people who poison the souls of others as they distort the figure of the bishop.* They told me: *We listen to your homilies and we have offered a spiritual bouquet in preparation for your visit. We have performed acts of obedience and*

other good works. The catechists informed me about their work and I encouraged them to continue to move forward in their ministry. I was also deeply moved by the letter that I received from the children of the village of El Rosario in Dulce Nombre de María who told me that their teacher who had been imprisoned was now free. In their letter they said: *Blessed be God because our teacher has been freed and now we are able to have our examinations. We have asked the Sisters to help us give thanks to God.*

At 5:00pm this afternoon we will have a beautiful celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation in the parish of San Marcos.

I not only want to speak about those things that are pleasing but also mention some things that are displeasing and here I refer to the incident that all of you are aware of and that occurred in the Church El Rosario and that involved the members of the Symphony Orchestra⁴. I believe there was a lack of communication. The person who is responsible for organizing these events ought to be more aware of the time when these events are scheduled so that such events, that might be important moments in the lives of people, do not go by unprepared for or cause confusion. In any case, speaking for the Church and for this lack of communication I want to ask forgiveness of you, the beloved members of the symphony orchestra.

I also want to speak about some sad news. I have previously spoken about the sacrilegious robbery that occurred in San José Villanueva. The same crime has been committed in Tamanique and the pastor in Panchimalco told me that he did not want to cause me to become more concerned and therefore he had not told me that his parish had also been robbed. In Tenancingo I have also received news that there have been abuses against the Church's property there. I want you to focus on that which is most serious. In San Martín not only were the sacred vessels robbed but also the Blessed Sacrament was stolen and we have not found the consecrated hosts. This is very painful because people of faith know that the Lord is present in the consecrated host. Hopefully my voice is heard by those who have perpetrated this horrible sacrilege and realize that we are dealing with the Eucharistic presence of the Lord. We ask that people respect this faith of the Christian community and not devalue the worship of the People of God. In order that all the people might participate in an act of atonement for this lack of respect for the Lord's presence we are preparing a Eucharistic celebration that will be held in the Church of San Martín next Saturday, December 2nd, at 7:00pm. We will be there at that time and we hope that the greatest number possible of the faithful will also be there. At that time we hope to be able to give you news that the hosts have been found.

The development and promotion of Christians in our community will have some very beautiful highlights next week, e.g., next Saturday a celebration will take place in Fe y Alegría and in Mercedes Umaña I have been invited to participate in an arts and crafts exhibition.

I want to thank you for the commentaries that have appeared in the magazine *Paz y Justicia* concerning our Pastoral Letter⁵. In the most recent edition commentaries about the reality of violence have appeared in the magazine. This magazine is now on sale and you can obtain a copy of it and have it as a commentary that presents the doctrine of my Letter in a very simple way. A series of notebooks that is part of the popular collection El Guanaquito is being published by UCA and this is an attempt to popularize and spread the doctrine of the Pastoral Letter. This collection will contain six different pamphlets that will make my Letter

available to the simple people in the countryside. I am grateful for the wonderful effort to make this doctrine available to the *campesinos* since I know that these matters are of great interest to them. You are able to obtain copies of these notebooks in UCA.

I ask this community to pray for the eternal rest of Doña Aminta de Osegueda, the wife of a good friend and great journalist, the director of *El Diario de Oriente* in San Miguel who is also deceased. I promised the mother of Marisela Guadalupe González Flores that we would remember her in our prayers. She would have celebrated her fifteenth birthday but drowned at San Diego beach. We pray that her birthday that was celebrated in eternity might bring comfort to this family that is in mourning.

My sisters and brothers, within this framework of the communion of the Church I also want to express my sincere gratitude to the United Kingdom of England for a gesture that has truly surprised me, namely, they have put forth my name for the Nobel Peace Prize⁶. I have received many letters of congratulations and I want to express my sincere gratitude to all those persons who have written me. Among the letters of congratulations I want to share with you some thoughts that were expressed by the College of Professionals of Juridical Studies who said among other things that my nomination is an endorsement by the authorities and authentic representatives of the people of Great Britain and that this nomination is a response of the international public opinion to those who speak against the pastoral lines of action of the Archbishop. My sisters and brothers, I see this as a gesture of support and I am deeply grateful and I want to clarify this here so that people do not confuse what has occurred. This is not dealing with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize but simply the United Kingdom has postulated my name as a candidate for this prize. I know that it is very difficult to receive this award and I more than understand the fact that there are other persons who are much more deserving of this award than I. I will be most happy that if at the time of awarding the prize the judges would not consider the nomination that the United Kingdom has made but simply give this honor to the person who most justly deserves it. As a candidate I would most willingly surrender my position to the individual who truly merits it... (applause).

What more could I ask for than your applause! Indeed this applause in no way profanes the temple because this applause is a free and spontaneous reaction of people's feelings, feelings that they are unable to express with their lips and so proclaim these feelings in a very understandable manner. I want to thank you because all of this means that the evangelical and pastoral lines that I try to be faithful to are not absurd or subversive but are simply signs of my humble fidelity to the command of the Lord that we are now going to reflect on.

With regard to the solidarity that has been expressed abroad I want to tell you that many letters and cablegrams and various other forms of communication have arrived from Amnesty International⁷. These letters refer to our situation and also express support to us in all of this. In recent days we have received ninety-two cablegrams and thirty-eight letters that have spoken against ORDEN and their abuse of the *campesinos*. These same letters speak in favor of human rights, especially among the people who live in San Pedro Perulapán and in Cinquera and also speak in favor of freedom for political prisoners. They also express their pain for our people because of the high rates of malnutrition among the children of our country. They express their solidarity with the struggles of the organizations of our people in obtaining their just demands. They denounce specific cases where people have been captured. A priest is coming here and he works with doctors and lawyers and members of Christian Action that has spoken against torture. All of these letters that are in our archives

are a true support and affirm the fact that the pastoral lines of action of the Church on behalf of human rights are legitimate and deeply felt in the whole world.

I also rejoice with the solidarity that was expressed by the First Assembly of Latin American Churches (a group of Protestant churches that met in Oaxtepec, Mexico). In a beautiful letter addressed to CELAM they expressed their solidarity with the liberating lines of the gospel and stated: *Our continent desperately needs the liberating message of the gospel. The defense of life, ministry to those who are broken, the struggle for justice, the affirmation of the dignity of the human person, the incarnated proclamation and the hope of the Kingdom are essential dimensions of the Good News that we are called to proclaim.* I am happy because the Protestant religions that are here among us and that have branches that are in harmony with our Church ought to understand that they should not allow themselves to be deceived or allow the gospel to be manipulated for political interests. Rather the gospel, as stated by our Protestant sisters and brothers in Oaxtepec, must be placed at the service of that which the Lord desires. With profound joy I have received a letter from a contemplative Sister who told me that all her sacrifices and holiness is offered to God for our Archdiocese.

As we continue to review the events of this past week and look at all of this from a religious point of view we know that we have all been impacted by the mass suicide that resulted in the death of more than eight hundred persons⁸. This event should serve as a warning in regard to religious ignorance. Let us study our religion! Today there is a certain euphoria among the sects. We see Gnostics walking among us and we also see walking among us those individuals --- I do not know their name but they wear strange robes and their hair is cut in a very eccentric manner --- where is all of this leading us? It is true that the freedom to believe is a human right and the Second Vatican Council issued a document on religious freedom⁹. L'Osservatore Romano, the official newspaper of the Holy See, has said that the freedom to believe does not excuse one from the obligation of seeking the truth and humbly accepting the faith. When the Christian faith which God revealed to us is discovered, the human person freely accepts it. No one who is here in the Cathedral today has been forced to be here. This is true freedom, the freedom to believe, the freedom to profess the truth that one has found, the truth of our faith. Freedom that leads people to spontaneous aberrations, such as mass suicide --- how is this the truth?

Thus my sisters and brothers, let us now analyze this Liturgical Year that concludes with the final passage of Saint Matthew's gospel. This is not the final passage of the gospel but rather the last discourse of Jesus, the eschatological discourse. As Saint Matthew organizes his gospel he offers us today a beautiful summary of that which is essential to the message that Christ wanted to pass on to women and men. We should not confuse the scene of the universal judgment and think that this is a description of how events are going to occur. Here we are dealing with an ecclesial reflection that is presented to us in a way that appeals to our fantasy but the message that is contained in this passage is essential to Christianity.

Therefore on this feast of Christ the King and in light of the readings I want to present my homily with the following theme which we also proclaim in our Creed: his kingdom will have no end. Let us reflect on these words today: his kingdom will have no end. I will comment on this theme using the following three points which are taken from the three readings: First, Why will the Kingdom of Christ have no end? Because God is the foundation of this kingdom. It moves forward from God and moves toward God and is realized in fulfilling the will of God. Second, Why does the Kingdom of God have no end? Because its law is the law of love. The Pope has just reminded us that only love constructs.

Every kingdom that is established on repression and violence and hatred can not endure. Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of love and therefore his kingdom is eternal. Third, Why is the Kingdom of Christ a kingdom that has no end? Because its king is Jesus Christ, the eternal One who lives forever.

Let us speak a few words that come to my mind because what is beautiful about this time of reflection is the fact that we are able to enter fully into the Word of God that is present in our history. At the same time we must remember to keep our feet firmly planted on this earth and everyone, with their own concrete history, must continue the journey here in El Salvador, yet become fully involved with the Kingdom of God so that the Word of God might enlighten us.

His kingdom will have no end because God is its foundation

In the first place I want to say that the Kingdom of God is a kingdom that traces its origin and foundation to God. In today's Gospel when Jesus calls the blessed ones he speaks the following words to them: *Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (2). This is not some improvised Kingdom. Notice how history begins as a result of God's will. It is true that women and men participate in a real way in the unfolding of history but God is the Lord of history. History flows from the will of God. Creation was God's first gesture. Nothing existed and when existence began, God had his kingdom in mind. The crowning point of creation, the human person, moves toward the kingdom of salvation, the kingdom of glory. Therefore the Kingdom of Christ is eternal because it was not invented by human beings, but has its origin in the mind of God. The second reading (3) tells us that at the end of time Christ, who has conquered all things and places all things under his feet, will speak to the eternal Father the beautiful words that he spoke from the cross, words that express the supreme satisfaction of one who has fulfilled his obligation: *Consumatus est! It is finished!* (4). I imagine Jesus, the universal king of all things that have been conquered through redemption saying: *Mission accomplished!*

Saint Paul says: *then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father* (15). Does it not seem to you, my sisters and brothers, that this glory will be most beautiful? I, a creature of this kingdom of creation, am simply an atom, if you will, in this kingdom that Christ will hand over to the Father and which kingdom will never perish. Who is alone in history? Who is an atom that becomes lost in the distance? Everything is foreseen, even the smallest child and the *campesino* who harvests the coffee and is not valued by his sisters and brothers, even the most insignificant person will find a place in this kingdom that Christ hands over to the Father. Without any exception he will be all in all. Who will be great in the kingdom of heaven? --- those who have filled themselves with Christ.

If God is the origin of this kingdom and if this kingdom will have no end, then God is also the goal. When Christ hands over this kingdom to the Father we will then understand that from now on God is the only absolute and everything else is relative. Do not forget these words: only God is absolute; only God embraces all of history from the beginning until the end. God lived before the beginning of history and will continue to live after history comes to an end. History is a small episode, as if God is playing. When history is concluded, Christ will hand over this history to the Father and his kingdom will continue as an adornment, a

robe, a palace and a temple of the eternal God. Saint Paul says that we are living stones who build up this eternal kingdom of God (6).

In the first reading God appears to be jealous of this property of his kingdom (7). It is sad to look at the figure of the evil pastors who do not know how to interpret the will of God in order to guide the people, to look at the figure of the pastor who is only concerned about himself and not the flock and to look at the government officials and pastors of the civil and ecclesiastical kingdoms who make the kingdom a place of self-worship. This is not what God wants. God speaks about the people, punished for the evil conduct of the pastors, and says: *I will bring them back to their own country. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered. I will care for them and hand them over to my son, the Messiah* (8).

My sisters and brothers, what is occurring in the Church today is that the eternal Father has chosen us and has handed us over to his Son in order that we might work for his kingdom. Remember the final prayer of Jesus on Holy Thursday: *When I was with them I protected them in your name and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction* (9). The son of destruction, Judas, is lost because he did not know how to accept this kingdom of God. My sisters and brothers I do not want there to be even one Judas in the Church and I want all of us to be saved in Christ.

His kingdom will have no end because his law is love

First, this kingdom is founded on God. Second, this kingdom has love as its law. Let us not forget this because this is the message of today's gospel. Saint John of the Cross has written some beautiful words: *In the evening of life you will be examined about love*¹⁰. We will be examined in the same way. We will not be examined to see if we have earned large sums of money or been applauded by people as if we were great in the eyes of the world and therefore praised and honored. Nothing like this will happen because all these realities will fade away. We will be examined about love. The essence of Christ's message is contained in this passage about the final judgment and is presented to us by Saint Matthew: *I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink* (10). Saint Matthew has not renounced his faith for indeed faith is the first impulse of women and men that draws them closer to God. But faith that does not reveal itself in practical love or in works is a faith that is dead. How many people say: *I know Christ! I try to pray to him!* Yes, they pray to him like the priest in the gospel who left the injured poor Samaritan on the road because he was in a hurry to pray (11). Faith is not enough.

Many have become bolder when the Pope spoke this week to the religious and said that they should not take radical political positions¹¹. They believe that the Pope is telling them not to meddle in politics. But be careful here and remember that I have told you before that you must be critical when you hear things like this. The Pope is condemning radical positions. If a priest or religious only sees things horizontally and only struggles for temporal realities, then that person has betrayed his or her vocation. The Pope has said the same thing that I said in my Pastoral Letter when I told the priests that the liberation that people expect from them is to motivate them with the highest liberation of Christ¹². The Pope does not deny the fact that we should enter into solidarity with the just demands of people with whom we minister. We listened to the words that he spoke in the homily that he proclaimed in Saint John Lateran when he presented himself to the people as the Bishop of Rome. He said the struggle on behalf of human rights is a present task of the Church¹³. According to today's gospel, taking a radical position would involve dedicating oneself solely to feeding the

hungry and giving drink to those who are thirsty --- in other words, dedicating oneself to the human person. But read the whole passage and pay attention to those who are going to be saved. They were surprised because they had never seen Christ but Jesus tells them: *I was hungry and you gave me food* (12). They ask him: *When Lord, did we do this?* Jesus responds: *Whatever you did for one of these least sisters or brothers of mine, you did for me* (13).

The horizontal becomes vertical when our charity is motivated by a true love of God. Therefore when we despise the poor person, the harvester of coffee or sugar-cane or cotton or when we despise the *campesinos* who today travel in caravans in search of their sustenance for the year, we should remember that there is the face of Christ. The face of Christ is seen on the face of those who harvest our crops in sacks and baskets, on the face of those who are tortured and mistreated in our prisons, on the faces of those children who are malnourished and have nothing to eat and on the faces of those who ask the Church to be their voice. How could the Church deny them this voice if it is Christ who is asking us to speak for them? I do not want to be on the wrong side at the time of the final judgment and hear the words: *Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was in need and you did not care for me* (14). In other words, you were more concerned about the purity of your orthodoxy, the quiet time of your prayer, your congregation or your school and you did not want to contaminate yourself with the humble. You were more concerned about your social, economic, or political prestige and therefore you despised me, the one who was asking you for help. This is the criteria that Jesus will use at the time of judgment. His kingdom is a kingdom of love, a kingdom that constructs.

What surprises will that hour of judgment bring us! Look at how this gospel passage turns upside down those things that we believe are necessary. This week I heard a commentary on the Pope's discourse: *See, the Pope is putting things in order. He has told the Sisters that they should wear their habits*. But this is really secondary. Yes, the Pope said that they should be proud of their habit¹⁴ but the habit does not make the monk --- rather it is love that makes the monk. The love of Christ must be translated into benevolence and love of the neighbor (15). Even though priests and religious might be well educated and refined, yet if they abandon the wounded person the road, then such a person is not a good priest even though he might be esteemed as very good. I am not defending the secularization of some people but rather I am speaking about that which is essential to the gospel -- I am not referring to those situations that are accidental. I tell you that at the time of the final judgment we will be surprised because we will see that the things that we thought were important are unimportant to Christ and that which we thought was unnecessary is the basis on which Christ is examining us. How did you treat those who were hungry and thirsty ... those who represented me? In this country Christ is so profoundly present, my sisters and brothers, that it would be a shame to have lived surrounded by the presence of Christ (because we are surrounded by poor) and not to have known him. It would be a shame to live in comfort and wealth and political well-being and not be concerned about Christ who was at our doors or Christ who was walking on our streets.

This morning, I ask forgiveness of God for not having been the Christian that I would like to be when Christ examines me at the hour of my death. I want to make amends for my faults and I say to all of you, my sisters and brothers with whom I share the responsibility of being Church and being the Kingdom of God: let us make the Kingdom of God what we truly are -- indeed our law is that of love.

His kingdom will have no end because its king is Jesus Christ

Finally, the kingdom of God is eternal because Christ is its king. The second reading is wonderful in this sense. But let us focus on the gospel. Saint Matthew is unique when he refers to Christ as the king for this is a title that he himself rejected (16). When the people wanted to make him king, he fled. But Saint Matthew, together with the first Christians, considered Jesus as a king (17), but not in the worldly sense as the Jewish people believed but as a true king. Therefore he speaks of the *Son of Man coming in his glory, and all the angels with him and he will sit upon his glorious throne and all the nations will be assembled before him* (18). With this image Saint Matthew describes what I said on previous Sundays --- three words that have made the waiting of Christians classical: *parousia*, a Greek word which in ancient times was used to designate the arrival of a government official among the people; *epiphany* which means revelation, for example, when a king is going to be present or a Pope is going to be crowned; *apocalypse* which also means revelation or manifestation. These three words are what Saint Matthew has in mind when he said: *When the Son of man comes in his glory and all his angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne and all the nations will be assembled before him* (19). This will be the time of the great parousia, the epiphany, the apocalypse of Christ.

According to the second reading and the gospel, the king has three powers. He is not a king of ridicule nor the king who stood before Pontius Pilate (20) and was the object of the scorn of the soldiers who crowned him with thorns and laughed at him. He is distinct from that king, yet he is the same and at the final judgment he will not come to suffer but to judge. In today's gospel he appears with three great powers: legislative power, judicial power and coercive power. Legislative power is the power to make laws; judicial power is the power to apply the law and pass judgment on those who violate the law; coercive power is the ability to punish the rebellious. When Christ judges according to the law of love he is a legislator and a judge. At that time true justice will shine forth, that justice that is so ridiculed even in the highest courts. The final judgment will take place in the highest court where bribes will have no effect. Christ has coercive power not because he has arms in his hands but because he has the power of reason and strength, the power to make his word real and present: *Depart from me into the eternal fire* (21). These words are effective because the gospel concludes with the words: *And these will go off to eternal punishment and the righteous to eternal life* (22).

Today Saint Paul presents this kingdom to us with a wider cosmic vision because the kingdom embraces all creation that God has desired to put under the rule of Christ. God wanted to restore all things in Christ. He is the key to creation. For this reason Saint Paul calls him the *first fruits* (23). This is a very Biblical and liturgical expression that refers to the first fruits of the harvest. When the first ears of corn or the first fruits of the harvest are brought to the Temple this is called primacy. The harvest that is being referred to in this passage is the harvest of the resurrection. Thus our resurrection is guaranteed just as the harvest with its first fruits is guaranteed. If the first ears of corn are produced in this way what kind of corn field are we going to take possession of! Indeed, the harvest of the resurrection is most splendid. Christ has risen and we will all rise!

Christ is the head of humankind because through one man death entered the world (24). If today we all die it is because of the sentence of death that was given to our first father, Adam and that continues to be a reality for all of his descendents. Death is a sacrament of

solidarity. So too the resurrection and eternal life are sacraments of solidarity with the second Adam (25) who came to become the head of the human race and to redeem all women and men. Here then we see the importance of Baptism. Through Baptism a child is incorporated into the head of redemption. Thus Jesus says: *No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit* (26). We see then the need for Baptism. Confirmation is as necessary as Baptism because it is an affirmation of our Baptism. It is for this reason that we are now administering this sacrament when people are aware of what is happening. Next Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, we will no longer confirm small children. There is an urgent need to baptize children as soon as possible and this continues to be an obligation that all parents must assume as their responsibility. This is so because Baptism incorporates children into Christ's redemption and when these children have the use of reason and are able to ratify this incorporation with their own consent, we hope that they will then be confirmed.

This king is immortal and his victory is absolute. Saint Paul presents to us today the fact that *every sovereignty and every authority and power will be destroyed and all his enemies will be placed under his feet* (27). This is a very graphic way of presenting all the arrogance and boldness that today is raised up against the Church of Christ: persecution, hatred and slander. Indeed, this is the destiny of the Church. *Take your throne at my right hand, while I make your enemies your footstool* (28). When all the powers have been dominated, Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father (29). He is the authentic liberator who frees us from all forms of slavery. Therefore when we proclaim that the Kingdom of Christ is here we are not separating ourselves from our present situation but we are saying that this situation of violence that we are now living will be submitted to the Kingdom of God and those who are guilty of these actions, if they do not convert in time, will become the Lord's footstool.

Events of the week

For example, the setting of fires has continued. At least five or six have been set during these last few days. Why do these actions remain a mystery? Why is not God's justice reflected before so many criminal hands?

We are also saddened during these days because of the abduction of the manager of Televisión and the manager of Phillips of El Salvador¹⁵.

Through Amnesty International we have listened to a voice that insists on amnesty for political prisoners¹⁶. In Argentina we have heard the beautiful phrase: *a Christmas without political prisoners*. Two years ago today, November 26, 1976, Lyl Milagro Ramírez and Manuel Alberto Rivera Vázquez were captured by the National Guard. Today is also the first anniversary of the disappearance of Professor Efraín Arévalo Ibarra and a worker named Alfredo Mendoza. We have also received news of abuses in Cinquera¹⁷. Therefore, my sisters and brothers, leaving aside for the moment the motivation of those who lift up their voices and ask for amnesty, I, as a representative of the Church of Christ, I express my solidarity with this voice of freedom that proclaims *a Christmas without political prisoners*. The Church places herself in the perspective that we have reflected on today: *I was in prison and you did not care for me* (30). We will say to the Supreme Judge: *Lord, we did everything possible but the forces of evil were more powerful and therefore we await the time when you make these enemies your footstool* (31). In the meantime I invite all the noble forces in El Salvador to react! Note well what I am asking for: freedom for those who are suffering unjustly. Let them be brought before the courts so that they can be judged and

given their freedom. We also want to celebrate here in El Salvador a Christmas without these tortures and torments in secret prisons.

Every Thursday from 5:30 to 5:45pm our radio station YSAX is going to present a program dedicated to the defense of justice and the law, especially in this sector among the *campesinos*. We are not going to be voices of false denunciations but rather we are going to inform people about the complaints that have been presented to the Ministry of Work and the results that have been obtained through the intervention of this Ministry. We understand that the Ministry of Work is responsible for the labor situation in our country. This Ministry is responsible for the strikes and discontent that occurs in our factories and in the harvest of coffee and in other areas of work. We tell people that they must have recourse to this Ministry. YSAX will echo this plea and also provide news that comes forth from the Ministry of Work. We hope that this publicity will stimulate people to fulfill the laws that are presently not being observed.

Finally I ask for your solidarity with our sister republic, Nicaragua. They are living very difficult moments. I received a copy of a telegram that the Catholic Associations and groups sent to the Holy Father, a telegram in which they supported Bishop Obando Bravo. They also point out that the Papal Nuncio has not supported their bishop as he should and they ask the Pope to look justly at their situation and support the Pastor whom they feel is very close to their situation.

We pray for all these situations of the country and the world --- and there are so many more to place before our God. Thus, on this day when we celebrate the feast of Christ the King we see the need for this celebration. We now approach the altar where Christ becomes present. Yes, he is hidden but we are the People of God, we are his Kingdom and we are a people of faith. Let us live this faith in Christ! Let us live this faith and reveal it in the love that we show to our sisters and brothers. In the evening of our life, the Supreme Judge of history will examine each concerning our love. Let us know how to work together now, for that judgment that is to come will be definitive. So be it.

¹ Homily of John Paul II in the Basilica of St John Lateran (12 November 1978), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 November 1978.

² *Ibid.*

³ See *Orientación*, 26 November 1978.

⁴ The Symphonic Orchestra of El Salvador informed the communication media that the priest in charge of the church El Rosario forbade them to give a concert during the Mass in honour of St Cecilia. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 24 November 1978.

⁵ See *Justicia y Paz*, Boletín de las Comunidades Rurales Cristianas, n° 77, San Salvador, November 1978.

⁶ In the month of October 1978, 118 parliamentarians from both houses in the UK wrote a letter to the Nobel Committee in Oslo proposing Mons. Romero for the Nobel Peace Prize. See *Orientación*, 10 December 1978.

⁷ See "Solidaridad", *Orientación*, 26 November 1978.

⁸ Members of the People's Temple directed by Jim Jones who committed mass suicide in Guyana in November 1978. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 21 November 1978.

⁹ See The Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* on religious freedom (7 December 1965).

¹⁰ The original words of St John of the Cross are: "A la tarde te examinarán del amor, aprende a amar como Dios quiere ser amado", which belong to his work *Dichos de luz y amor*. See *Obras Completas*, Madrid, 1988, p. 94.

¹¹ See Discourse of John Paul II to the Roman clergy (9 November 1978), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 November 1978.

¹² See *La Iglesia y las organizaciones políticas populares* (6 August 1978), p. 27.

¹³ See Homily of John Paul II in the Basilica of St John Lateran (12 November 1978).

¹⁴ See Discourse of John Paul II to the Roman clergy (9 November 1978).

¹⁵ Jorge Rosales Álvarez, manager of Televisión Educativa was kidnapped on 22 November 1978 and freed a day later; no group claimed responsibility. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 23 + 24 November 1978. The Dutch citizen Fritz Schuitema was kidnapped on 24 November 1978 by FARN. See *La Prensa Gráfica*, 30 November 1978.

¹⁶ See *Orientación*, 26 November 1978.

¹⁷ See “Cinquera, tierra de represión”, *Orientación*, 10 December 1978.

Marginal References (1) Jn 16,7; (2) Mt 25,34; (3) 1Cor 15,7b; (4) Jn 19,30; (5) 1Cor 15,24-28; (6) 1P 2,5; (7) Ez 34,11; (8) Ez 34,11-12; (9) Jn 17,12; (10) Mt 25,35; (11) Lk 10,31; (12) Mt 25,35.37; (13) Mt 25,41; (14) Mt 25,41-42; (15) Lk 10,31; (16) Jn 6,15; (17) Mt 25,34; (18) Mt 25,31.34; (19) Mt 25,31; (20) Jn 19,1; (21) Mt 25,41; (22) Mt 25,46; (23) 1Cor 15,20; (24) 1Cor 15,21^a; (25) 1Cor 15,21b; (26) Jn 3,5; (27) 1Cor 15,24-25; (28) 1Cor 15,25; (29) 1Cor 15,24; (30) Mt 25,43; (31) 1Cor 15,25.