



**Meditation for the Last Sunday after Pentecost
Christ the King Sunday
November 22 2020**

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.

[Ephesians 1:17-18]

Christ the King is an image of Christ that originated in the early church as an affirmation that through his death Christ defeated the powers of evil and tyranny that hold human beings in bondage. When we celebrate Christ the King on this last Sunday of the liturgical year, we hold in our minds two aspects of Jesus: the Crucified One and the Triumphant One, the One who is humiliated and the One who is glorified. What we celebrate today is a divine Peace that exposes the emptiness and impotence of even the most barbaric human power.

We don't pretend that evil has disappeared, or that tyranny no longer exists, or that human suffering isn't real. We celebrate the dignity of human beings that cannot be violated by suffering. We celebrate the deep unity of humanity that will not disintegrate under tyranny. We celebrate our liberation through Christ from all degradation and shame. And we renew our commitment to live into our own, inviolate, dignity.

The image of Christ the King has been the catalyst for a European Christian triumphalism that has led to destruction of cultures. However, the truly radical challenge of Christ the King is, as Paul so beautifully puts it, to see with *the eyes of our hearts enlightened*. Jesus teaches us that salvation is not a reward for good works granted by an omnipotent God in some distant time and place, based upon how well we have followed the rules laid out by our religious institutions. According the teaching of Jesus, salvation—*shalom*—is a way of living and seeing *with the eyes of our hearts enlightened*: To see that the distinctions often imposed by secular authorities are false: Between poverty and dignity between power and compassion, between hope and pragmatism, between accountability and forgiveness.

Today we promise to keep the eyes of our hearts open to new and unexpected signs of the presence of an invisible and ever-present God in whom there is no darkness and no fear.

As Jim Forest has pointed out:

If I cannot find the face of Jesus in the face of those who are my enemies, if I cannot find him in the unbeautiful, if I cannot find him in those who have the "wrong ideas," if I cannot find him in the poor and the defeated, how will I find him in bread and wine, or in the life after death? If I do not reach out in this world to those with whom he has identified himself, why do I imagine that I will want to be with him, and them, in heaven? Why would I want to be, for all eternity, in the company of those whom I avoided every day of my life?