



SACRED HEART OF JESUS: King of our Hearts and King of the Universe

*by Sister Judith Clare
November 2009*

Dear Friends of the Heart of Christ,

Entering the front door of our monastery and standing in our narthex or foyer, the visitor to our house is greeted by a beautiful crucifix on the upper wall. If you were to examine this crucifix more closely, you would see that it does not have the usual crucified figure of Christ that we envision on the cross. This crucifix, the gift of two generous benefactors when we were building our monastery, portrays the image of Christ as King with a golden crown on his head and dressed in regal red garments. It is the only crucifix in our monastery that is made like this. However, it is not the only image of Christ as King here. In fact on the beautiful liturgical vestment we have which was made by our Sister Gemma Maria and is worn for the Feasts of Christ the King, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Saint Margaret Mary, there is an exquisite stitchery of Christ as King holding a scepter and globe and with a flaming heart on his chest. In this month of November, when we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King on the last Sunday of the liturgical year (and falling on November 22 this year), we are reminded again of Christ's universal reign of love, mercy and justice over every element of creation. Jesus Christ is a King of love and justice and it is only fitting that his blazing heart, so upright and so compassionate, should be prominently displayed on this glorious feast day.

The Feast of Christ the King was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quas Primas*. Why? The Pope, vastly aware of the rise of secularism in the world and the escalation of worldly powers that sought to eradicate Christ and his authority over heaven and earth, wanted to emphasize that there would be no real peace and happiness in the world and in human hearts without Jesus Christ. Perceptive people as well as the Pope were witnessing at the time the rise of dictatorships in Europe and saw that Catholics were being taken in by these worldly leaders. In other words, the majority of ordinary men and women were being deceived into thinking that the programs of secular authorities were the answer to their problems and their prosperity. As an antidote to these trends, the Feast of Christ the King was established. The Pope hoped that by implementing this feast, nations would see that the Church has a right to freedom of worship and immunity from state control and that the faithful would be given strength and courage to resist the onslaught of secular values as well as being reminded that Christ should reign in their hearts, minds, wills and bodies.

Reading these descriptions moved me to think how applicable they are in our own times. Today more than ever we need Christ the King—a King of love and mercy, of humility and service, of truth and clarity, of peace and justice to rule over us. The thought of Christ as ruler has been disdained and rejected by many and there are those in high places who sense that their own ideologies will be



threatened by this type of authority. Yet, how we need Christ's Kingship over our world and over our individual lives today.

In a contemporary painting entitled *One Nation Under God* done by an American artist, Jesus Christ is portrayed holding up the United States constitution before a crowd of people—some famous citizens of the past and some everyday people of the present. Those on the right side of the picture are supposed to symbolize the ordinary God-fearing folks and those on the left side represent those with secular attitudes and beliefs. This painting and its title have generated an unbelievable amount of controversy and angry feelings. The simple avowal that our nation (or any nation for that matter) could be under the watchful eye of a Supreme Being who should be acknowledged and thanked for its manifold blessings is the source of whole movements of people who vehemently deny the religious (esp. Christian) heritage upon which our country was founded. So we can see before our very eyes similar situations existing that caused the Feast of Christ the King to be instituted in the first place. Will the nations of the world finally embrace the Lord as King of their lives and reap the rewards of His powerful protection and providential care?

Perhaps such considerations seem out of place in Sacred Heart spirituality. Not at all. Anyone who thinks deeply about and prays fervently to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, realizes and experiences all too plainly that living for the Heart of Christ entails a spiritual battle with dark forces—be they of this world or the underworld—that will try to obliterate God's plans.

Turning to the life of Saint Margaret Mary, our Visitandine Sister, we can find a poignant illustration of this. Most people are familiar with St. Margaret Mary's great revelations from the Sacred Heart that principally occurred from 1673-75. However, before her death in 1690 (at age 43) she received from the Lord what has become known as *The Last Grand Revelation*. She refers to these messages in three of her letters written in 1689. They describe a divine illumination she had about the disorders of the King of France and the court. [You may recall that King Louis XIV reigned during the entire life-time of St. Margaret Mary.] Our saint writes in the letter of February 23, 1689 to her former superior Mother de Saumaise to thank her for promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart. Then she broaches, in vague tones, a more social and national side of the devotion. She says, "Ah, what happiness for you and for those that contribute to it; for they draw upon themselves the friendship and eternal benedictions of this amiable Heart and a powerful protection on our country. It will not be less effectual to turn away the vengeance and severity of the just anger of God for so many crimes committed against it. She adds, "But I hope the Divine Heart will become an inexhaustible source of mercy. It wishes only to establish its reign among us, in order to grant us more abundantly its precious graces of sanctification and salvation."

The second letter dated June 17, 1689 displays even more the merciful plans the Heart of Jesus had on nations, throwing into a brighter light the public side of devotion to the Sacred Heart. After expressing to Mother de Saumaise the Lord's desire that the daughters of the Visitation distribute



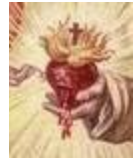
the fruits of Sacred Heart spirituality, Margaret Mary wrote, "But He does not wish to stop here. He has still greater designs, which can be executed only by His almighty power. He desires, then, it seems to me, to enter with pomp and magnificence into the palaces of Kings and princes, therein to be honored..." Then she clearly notes, "Here are the words that I heard on this point: 'Make known to my eldest son of My Heart (speaking of the King) that as his temporal birth was obtained through devotion to the merits of My holy childhood, in the same manner he will obtain his birth of grace and eternal glory by the consecration that he will make of himself to My Adorable Heart which wishes to triumph over his heart and by mediation over the great ones of the world. I wish to reign in his palace, to be painted on his standards and engraven on his arms, in order to render him victorious over all his enemies.'" [It is important to recall that in speaking of the King, God was addressing all souls living in that country, since the King represented them all.]

Such a message from heaven must have been a bombshell. The Lord was asking that France-in this specific case, but really all nations in general-should place their trust in the blessing of God. When Margaret Mary wrote this letter to her former superior now residing in another monastery, she was really testing the waters. What did this experienced and spiritually mature religious think of all this? Mother de Saumaise, a bulwark of practicality, probably was stunned by so serious a communication from her humble and hidden little sister in Christ. In fact, she did not respond and our saint composed a third letter to her on August 12, 1689 to let her know how pained she was by her silence. Gently complaining, we sense the human side of Margaret Mary and the weight such a request from the Lord placed on her reticent shoulders. But she must speak she explains even if she has to do violence to herself because God wants this for the interest of His glory.

Ultimately, to ensure that the desires of the Sacred Heart would be made known, St. Margaret Mary penned an open letter toward the end of August, 1689, putting into writing what she felt must be expressed so that those concerned would become aware of their obligations. She delineated three modes of action to satisfy the wishes of the Divine Heart: 1) that France be consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus 2) that a national temple be raised to the glory of the Heart of Jesus 3) that an inscription to the Heart of Jesus be on the national standard. Under these conditions, the Sacred Heart promised that France would be victorious over all her enemies and that the country would be given an eternal reign of honor and glory. In her own practical way, the Saint even suggested that the best means for reaching the King and realizing the success of God's plan would be through the King's confessor, who enjoyed great favor at this time. However, she stated that "it will be very difficult, on account of the great obstacles Satan purposes putting in the way, as well as of all the other difficulties God will permit in order to make His power seen..."

Posterity records the results of these endeavors by our holy Sister. The King and his heirs failed to respond to the requests of the Sacred Heart and France fell into a series of wars that only brought more and more destruction and culminated 100 years later in 1789 in the French revolution finally sweeping away the monarchy. Will history repeat itself as nations separate themselves further from

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the reign of Christ and create laws that go against God's laws? The Sacred Heart of Jesus has assured us that He will reign in spite of Satan and all those that rise up to oppose Him. May our prayers and our witness further His Kingdom on earth and may we turn to the Sacred Heart as our powerful protector in the days ahead.

God be Praised!