



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

October 2020

My dear friends and colleagues,

There are downsides to every job; and perhaps one of the downsides to being Monarch of Great Britain is having to open Parliament. We're told it's tedious riding in an unsprung ancient coach and wearing a crown which, the Queen has said, quite ruins one's hairdo. Well, that may not be everyone's idea of hardship, but what sometimes must cause her to grit her teeth is delivering a speech written by a politician with the aim of boosting their party's poll rating. How it must grate, to have to say "My Government will.....", when you don't agree with the text of the speech.



But then, that is one of the things about constitutional monarchs; they have to let other people tell them what to say. Here that came about after Charles I lost his head in 1649. Other countries followed suit over the centuries. The Queen might complain about wearing a heavy crown, but never in his or her life is the Danish monarch allowed to wear theirs. It is on display among the crown jewels in Copenhagen, but the only time it comes near the sovereign is at their funeral; then it is put on the coffin. The Danes say it is the only time when it is safe to let them wear it!

Pope Pius XI instituted The Feast of Christ the King in 1925 for the universal Church in his encyclical *Quas Primas*. He made the connection between denying the sovereignty of Christ and the rise of secularism. At the time of *Quas Primas*, secularism was indeed rising, and many Christians (including Catholics) began to doubt Christ's authority and existence, as well as the Church's right and power to claim to continue Christ's authority. Pius XI, and the rest of the Christian world, witnessed the rise of dictatorships in Europe, and saw Catholics being taken in by these earthly leaders. So the Feast of Christ the King was instituted during a time when respect for Christ and the Church was waning, when the feast was most needed. In fact, it is still needed today, as these problems have not vanished, but have worsened. That is why the Feast's gospel matters so much. The question put to Jesus by his judges was "Are you the king of the Jews?" He would not answer that directly, because he would have been misunderstood. Instead he tries to get them to see what his kingship is about; and that it is not a kingship of this world at all. So they rephrase it, and Pilate asks "You are a king then?" Jesus answers Yes, I am a king. A king in a different sort of kingdom from any we know on earth.

All earthly kingdoms will pass away. One of the endearing stories about Queen Victoria is that her favourite hymn was "The day thou gavest Lord, is ended", when she must have envisaged the sun constantly rising on some outpost of the Empire. As the flag was lowered at sunset in Canada it was being unfurled at sunrise in India. But she also knew that Our Lord's throne "shall never, like earth's proud empires, pass away". The Lord's kingdom is not of this world, and is not subject to the fall of empires.

Among the crown jewels of heaven none is greater than that of woven thorns, bejewelled with the Saviour's drops of blood. His rule is Service, his robe of state is Humility. Whoever would be first in His kingdom must be last, whoever would rule must be the servant of all. His kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

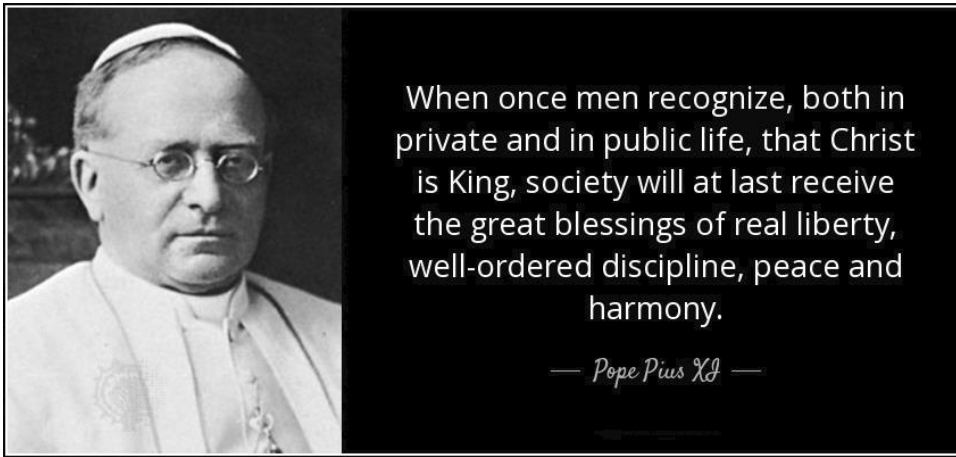
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Refreshment, light and peace

A reflection for November – the Month of Souls

In the Gregorian Canon most of us use at Mass there is a part when we pray for the Departed and ask that they may be granted a place of “refreshment, light and peace”.

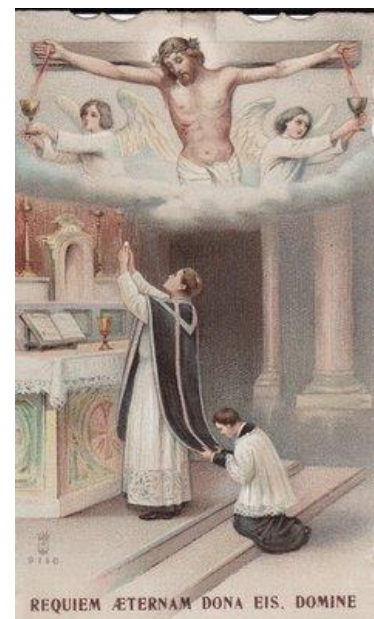
I, like others, and many of my brother clergy, have sat at the bedsides of those about to pass out of this world and seen a living, breathing, loving person slip away. The person has gone. And those words about refreshing, light and peace are the things most dying people are longing for.

By *refreshment*, we usually mean a new start or at least a new look. It can also mean a cool drink on a hot day, or a quick shower after a hard job. And even computers have a “Refresh” button which brings a page up to date. So the departed person will be longing for the refreshing sight of a new life.

Refreshment, *light* and peace. This will be to them like emerging into light from a dark place. Often their deaths will have been frustrating, painful and long, their strengths and faculties closing down and ebbing away. So we pray that they may arrive in a place of light, where they will see no more “through a glass darkly” as St Paul puts it in I Corinthians 13:12, but “face to face”, no longer to “know in part” but to “know as they are known” by the loving God who made them just so that they might share his life of light and love.

And this will bring them the third thing we pray for in the Canon, *peace*. “May they rest in peace” we frequently say. Peace of mind, peace of spirit, no more struggle, no more misunderstandings, no more unpleasantness, no more pain. Just “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

Refreshment, light and peace sums it up perfectly. And that’s just the beginning, till the trumpet sounds and the rest period is over, and the General Resurrection raises us all to a new life of love. And we have no adequate words to describe that – except perhaps “Heaven”!



(For variety I will often use as a “desk picture” some Isle of Sheppey scenes viewed from my desk, from the garden, or within a few minutes of it.)