

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe; a word of thanks

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Astronomy presented Pope Pius XI with a much smaller universe in 1925. He was not talking about science, but the moral trajectory of his times. What some people call “populism” today had produced tyrants whose followers would kill almost too many people to count. This pope, among others, could sense that rising powers were turning governments into masters, not servants.

Ninety-three years ago, that pope decided that the last Sunday of the Church year should remind us of the one prophet and teacher, the now-risen creator and rightful exemplar of all human good: Jesus Christ. So this liturgical “topping off” of our year remains just as valid today, recalling us from whatever distracts from Christ’s moral claim on all creation. And his deserving of first place in our minds, wills and hearts.

Pius’ encyclical letter *Quas primas* teaches a perspective that remains valid today. “Truly the principal aim of this reign is spiritual and pertains to spiritual things ... His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36) ... in opposition to the reign of Satan and the powers of darkness (*regno Satanae et potestati tenebrum*).” It is in the nature of Christ’s role that he led us to participate in his kingdom, now and forever.

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Yes, I was at the bishops’ meetings in Baltimore, but came home before the voting and elections. Some very good things were happening, and some less than helpful moments crowded in. People are curious to know what was happening, but I think it was like the 1960s — if you weren’t there, I can’t explain it. Resolve remains very high to get to the bottom of the McCarrick scandal, to increase the role of laity in investigating any sexual or harassment behavior of bishops, and to recommit to continuous improvement in all matters related to the protection of children.

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You may not see this until after Thanksgiving Day. Our family will have gathered, but in several locations. As I was getting ready to travel, I thought of events and people that I would carry in my heart as we prayed before the meal. Last month, we commiserated over losing someone who had a role in our holiday dinners. Dorcas B. Reilly died on Oct. 15 in Camden, N.J. In 1955, she worked in the Campbell Soup Company test kitchen and invented the green-bean casserole with the crunchy fried onions on top. At this writing, I cannot tell you which brother-in-law will have proposed a toast in her memory.