



## United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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### Memorandum

**To:** Diocesan Pro-Life Directors; Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Directors and NFP Coordinators; Diocesan Social Justice Directors; Diocesan Directors of Evangelization and Catechesis; Diocesan Youth and/or Young Adult Ministry Directors; State Catholic Conference Directors

**From:** Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities; Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth; Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development; Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis; Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty

**Date:** October 28, 2015

**Re:** **Christ the King Materials – November 22, 2015**

The Conference has prepared materials that may be useful for educating the faithful about the Solemnity of Christ the King, which will take place on November 22, 2015, and its connection to religious liberty. The materials listed below may be distributed to parishes for their use:

1. Homily Background Helpers and Prayers of the Faithful (please do not post online) (note that the Homily Helpers provide an optional paragraph regarding the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) collection that will occur in many dioceses and parishes that weekend)
2. Christ the King One-Pager (English)
3. Cristo Rey One-Pager (Spanish)

Thank you for all that you do. *Viva Cristo Rey!*

**November 22, 2015**  
**Solemnity of Christ the King**

**Readings, Suggested Homily Background Notes, and Prayers of the Faithful**

**Readings**

**Reading 1: Daniel 7:13-14**

As the visions during the night continued, I saw  
one like a Son of man coming,  
on the clouds of heaven;  
when he reached the Ancient One  
and was presented before him,  
the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship;  
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that shall not be taken away,  
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

**Responsorial Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5**

R. (1a) The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.  
The LORD is king, in splendor robed;  
robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.  
R. The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.  
And he has made the world firm,  
not to be moved.  
Your throne stands firm from of old;  
from everlasting you are, O LORD.  
R. The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.  
Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;  
holiness befits your house,  
O LORD, for length of days.  
R. The LORD is king; he is robed in majesty.

**Reading 2: Revelation 1:5-8**

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness,  
the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.  
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,  
who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,  
to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.  
Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,  
and every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him.

All the peoples of the earth will lament him.  
Yes. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God,  
“the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty.”

### **Gospel: John 18:33b-37**

Pilate said to Jesus,  
“Are you the King of the Jews?”  
Jesus answered, “Do you say this on your own  
or have others told you about me?”  
Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I?  
Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me.  
What have you done?”  
Jesus answered, “My kingdom does not belong to this world.  
If my kingdom did belong to this world,  
my attendants would be fighting  
to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.  
But as it is, my kingdom is not here.”  
So Pilate said to him, “Then you are a king?”  
Jesus answered, “You say I am a king.  
For this I was born and for this I came into the world,  
to testify to the truth.  
Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

### **Suggested Homily Notes**

#### **Overall:**

In the United States, the Solemnity of Christ the King, which we celebrate today, may be more difficult to appreciate because we are not used to the idea of a king, thinking that kingship tends to lead to oppression and is contrary to our ideals of freedom and equality. However, the kingship of Christ gives human freedom both its firmest foundation and final goal.

#### **First Reading:**

1. In the First Reading from the Book of Daniel, the prophet Daniel sees a vision of one like a Son of Man receiving dominion all peoples, nations and kingdoms. When Jesus stood before Caiaphas, He spoke of the fulfillment of that vision in Himself. See Matt. 26:64. Jesus Himself will judge all nations, and He works through His Church in the world.
2. When we look at the world around us, this vision may seem like it is not being fulfilled. We see many countries of Western Europe turning from the faith. We see Christians persecuted by tyrannies and war in the Middle East, Africa, China, and in other places. And in this nation, we see threats to the Church by secularization and by attempts to force Christians and others who believe in natural law to leave their faith at the door when it comes to business, education, charitable works, or government. We should not be surprised at this struggle to make the kingdom of God present, for it has ever been a struggle for the faithful. Daniel saw this vision when his people were in exile in Babylon. And the vision recounted in this reading begins with a

prophecy of four terrible powers on earth imposing war and oppression. Likewise, the Church has often faced oppression, from pagan Rome to the present.

3. However, over the course of time, all the powers of this earth fade away, while the accomplishments dedicated to the kingdom of God remain. After all, the Roman Empire has long since vanished, but the Church has preserved what was best in it, such as the Latin language, the Augustinian and Benedictine orders built upon great Roman thought, and the city of Rome itself. The kingdoms of the Middle Ages are long since gone. But the Church has preserved the best of that era in such things as the idea of a university, Gothic architecture and the notion of cathedrals, the ideals of chivalry, and the Franciscan, Dominican and Carmelite orders. Time brings an end to all nations on earth, but the best of every land is redeemed by Christ.

### **Responsorial Psalm 93**

1. In today's Psalm, the Psalmist celebrates the glory and the permanence of the reign of God and of His precepts. Once again, when we look at the world as it is now, it may seem like this vision is not being fulfilled, but instead there is so much war, chaos, and division.

2. But in the midst of all of this chaos and strife, the truth of God shines through and in fact increases throughout this time. The Church teaches the same faith she has ever taught. And in response to errors, she increases in the understanding and explanation of it through such things as the Second Vatican Council and the writings of St. John Paul II. Likewise, while the specific rubrics change over time, we celebrate the same Mass and all of the same sacraments and other liturgies that have united the faithful throughout the centuries. And the Church, despite all of our different backgrounds, and even disagreements about how to proceed, unites all peoples of the earth together in the common pursuit of truth, charity, holiness, and the splendor of God. This common quest brings about a true peace among nations and a unity that does not suppress each nation's individuality, but rather allows the different nations to live together in harmony. Speaking of globalization in Philadelphia, Pope Francis affirmed this vision of unity among nations: "But a globalization which attempts to bring everyone together while respecting the uniqueness and gifts of each person or people is a good globalization; it helps all of us to grow, and it brings peace. I like to use a geometrical image for this. If globalization is a sphere, where every point is equidistant from the center, it cancels everything out; it is not good. But if globalization is like a polyhedron, where everything is united but each element keeps its own identity, then it is good; it causes a people to grow, it bestows dignity and it grants rights to all."

### **Second Reading**

1. In this passage from the Book of Revelation, John sees Jesus as the great ruler of the kings of the earth, who makes His people a free kingdom, freed from sin and able to be "priests for his God and Father". This vision describes what true freedom is, namely freedom from sin and freedom to participate in the love of God. Americans rightly value freedom but often misunderstand what it is. If one asks people what freedom is, the most common response would probably be the ability to do whatever one likes. However, that is the freedom of a wild animal, which is really the dominance of one's desires over one's calling to holiness and true love. As Jesus says, "He who commits sin is a slave of sin." John 8:34; see Romans 6:5-14.

2. Rather, as St. John Paul II said in Chapter 8 of his last book, *Memory and Identity*, "Freedom is for love." For love is the one thing that cannot be compelled. It must be freely given and

freely received; otherwise, it is not love. And love, so freely given and received makes us, as St. John says, born of God and able to know Him. See 1 John 4:7.

3. In this context, we see the rightful basis for freedom and human rights. We are entitled to certain rights because we have the calling to live out the love of God in many ways. As Pope Benedict wrote in section 42 of *Caritas in Veritate*, “it is important to call for a renewed reflection on how rights presuppose duties, if they are not to become mere license.” This connection between rights and duties may seem like a limitation, but it is in fact the only sure foundation for human dignity and liberty. Our Founding Fathers saw this connection between human rights and the law of God, for in the Declaration of Independence they grounded their actions “upon the law of Nature and of Nature’s God” and upon the inalienable rights given to us by our Creator.

### **The Gospel of John**

1. Here in today’s Gospel, we see the great paradox of Jesus showing His power by suffering. At a superficial level, it seems that Pilate is the one in power. And Jesus seems like the failed leader, whose supporters were not with Him. But, with sacred wisdom, we see the reverse. The seemingly powerful Roman governor is in fact cowering before the mobs, allowing a death he knows is unjustified, and in general only keeping the pretense of order. By contrast, Jesus, fulfilling the ideal of kings leading their armies into battle, heads triumphantly to confront sin and death, preparing to defeat them.

2. Like Rome, this nation has a glorious ideal. The United States has become great because of her noble vision, of the rights given by God and of the willingness to accept different traditions, whether religious or national, into our common quest. Pope Francis called attention to America’s tradition of pluralism when he encouraged Hispanic immigrants in Philadelphia, saying, “I ask you not to forget that, like those who came here before you, you bring many gifts to this nation. ... By contributing your gifts, you will not only find your place here, you will help to renew society from within. Do not forget what took place here over two centuries ago. Do not forget that Declaration which proclaimed that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights and that governments exist in order to protect and defend those rights.”

3. Religious liberty was ever central to this notion of American human rights. For example, the Magna Carta, which is considered to be the foundation of Anglo-American law, begins with an affirmation of the liberty of the Church from the government. And the Constitution’s Bill of Rights begins with a guarantee of the free exercise of religion. Thomas Jefferson was so proud of the precursor to this guarantee that his gravestone reads, “Here lies Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and of the Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty, and Founder of the University of Virginia.”

4. However, as Pilate faltered in the face of worldly pressure, so this nation, like many places in the West, is faltering from its dedication to religious liberty in face of the pressure of secularization. As Pope Benedict went on to warn the American bishops, “Today, that consensus has eroded significantly in the face of powerful new cultural currents, which are not only directly opposed to core moral teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but are also increasingly hostile to Christianity as such. It is imperative that the entire Catholic Church in the United States

comes to realize the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness in the cultural and political spheres.”

5. In the face of such challenges, the Church and all people of good will must stand firm in defending this right to live out our faith in practice. Pope Francis encouraged American Catholics in his White House speech: “American Catholics are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive, to safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities, and to rejecting every form of unjust discrimination. With countless other people of good will, they are likewise concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect their deepest concerns and their right to religious liberty. That freedom remains one of America's most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.” The question is not whether the Church will survive these threats. She has ever outlasted her persecutors, for as Jesus promised, the jaws of death cannot prevail against His Church. *See* Matt. 16:18. The question is about the future of this nation. The question is whether, as we celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Magna Carta and almost 250 years of independence, the vision of our beginning will falter, or whether this nation will continue to be a shining example of a land that can welcome people of all faiths united together in the rights that God has given us, especially the right to uphold His worship and His law.

6. I will end with Pope Francis's words to Americans in a speech he gave on religious liberty at Independence Hall in Philadelphia during his recent visit to the U.S. He asked us to “defend these rights, especially your religious freedom, for it has been given to you by God himself.” ([http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150926\\_usa-liberta-religiosa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150926_usa-liberta-religiosa.html))

[(Optional paragraph for those parishes participating in the CCHD collection Nov. 22): One of the ways we live out our faith in practice is through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, or “CCHD”. The CCHD is an instrument of the Catholic Church working to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ, “... to bring good news to the poor ... release to captives ... sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18). Pope Francis has told us to “never tire of working for a more just world...” (Apostolic Journey to Rio de Janeiro). The CCHD is dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty by funding community programs that encourage independence. You are essential to its success. Your generous donations to the CCHD collection today will give those in poverty the support they need to make lasting changes.]

### **Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)**

*Celebrant:*

**Aware that only in Christ do we find true freedom, let us present our prayers, interceding for all in need, as we respond, *Lord, hear our prayer.***

*Deacon/Reader:*

- 1. For Pope Francis, our Bishop N., and all the ministers of the Church, that their preaching and example may encourage the faithful to stand firm in their beliefs as witnesses of the Gospel, *we pray to the Lord...***

2. **For our President, Governor, legislators, judges, and all in service to the common good, that through the gift of heavenly wisdom, they may never tire in their work to uphold religious freedom and conscience protection for all, *we pray to the Lord...***
3. **For those discerning God's call in their lives: may they be open to listen to the Lord's voice and find support to say 'yes' to his invitation to serve freely in love, *we pray to the Lord...***
4. **For the many ministries of the Church that reveal God's power and love to the world, especially our educational institutions, health care facilities, community centers, and charitable services, especially the Catholic Campaign for Human Development: may they enjoy full protection to fulfill their mission, *we pray to the Lord...***
5. **For the sick who long for healing, for the dying, and for those called to heal and comfort the sick and suffering: may they be free to follow their faith, while fulfilling their professional duties, *we pray to the Lord...***
6. **For all of us who gather in prayer, trusting in God's grace to save: may we, through the gifts of the Spirit, have the wisdom to know God's will and find courage to stand up in witness to his love, *we pray to the Lord...***
7. **For those who have died and for all who grieve and mourn their passing from this life: may the promise of resurrection for the just give hope to all, *we pray to the Lord...***

*Celebrant:*

**Almighty eternal God,  
in whom we find true freedom and lasting peace,  
look with favor, we pray, on our needs  
and, seeing the faith that inspires us to pray to you,  
grant what we truly need, especially the freedom to serve you in love.  
Through Christ our Lord and King. Amen.**



# CHRIST THE KING

## A KINGSHIP THAT BEARS WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

Each year at the conclusion of the liturgical year, we fittingly celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. As the Apostle St. Paul teaches us, “In [Jesus Christ] everything in heaven and earth was created... and continues in being” (Col 1:16-17). He is the ‘Alpha and Omega’, the ‘Beginning and End’, the ‘Way, Truth, and Life’. Indeed, Christ promises to His faithful friends the gift of salvation, the pledge of everlasting life through His Resurrection. Therefore, faithfulness to Christ, our King, opens the door to our eternal happiness.

**Origin of the Feast:** In 1925, Pope Pius XI instituted the Feast of Christ the King in the encyclical *Quas Primas* (from Latin, “In the First”) to respond to secularism—the adoration of ‘idols’ of the earthly world, such as money and fame, above God. Pope Pius XI recognized that secularism would breed hostility against the Church. In fact, during the 20th century, governments in Mexico, Russia, and Europe, infiltrated by secularism, threatened not only the Catholic Church but also civilization itself. *Quas Primas* gave Catholics the hope that while governments may crumble, Christ’s Kingdom, unlike the kingdoms of this world, would last forever.

**Christ’s Kingship:** Although *Quas Primas* was written almost 90 years ago, it continues to ring true today. For instance, secularism continues to separate people from God, as evidenced by the rejection of Church teachings and the denial of God Himself. In addition, recent Pew Research Center data shows the worldwide increase of religious hostilities. Now more than ever, we must celebrate that Jesus Christ is King of the Universe, including in the following ways:

- **In Christ, we must preserve our fundamental rights.** Jesus Christ reveals the fulfillment of the truths of creation found in the book of Genesis: “God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Therefore, “made in [His] image and likeness,” each of us possesses an immeasurable goodness (Gen 1:26). And, this goodness from Christ, given to the heart of man, calls us to fight for what is justly ours: the right to life, freedom of conscience and religious freedom.



FOR THIS I WAS BORN,  
AND FOR THIS I HAVE  
COME INTO THE  
WORLD, TO BEAR  
WITNESS TO THE  
TRUTH.

JOHN 18:37

- **In Christ, we must evangelize in love.** Christ, both meek and humble of heart, is the perfect servant of God: Through His teaching and His life, Jesus intended to confirm, not to coerce, others in faith (*Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 11). Through our daily action, let us follow Christ’s loving example of showing the truth to others.

- **In Christ, we must proclaim the truth.** Christ’s Kingship “bear[s] witness to the truth” (John 18:37). In bearing this witness, Christ acknowledges government authority, “rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21). Nonetheless, we are asked to speak out “against governing powers which oppose the holy will of God” (*Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 11).

Bearing witness to the truth in this age can be difficult. But Christ has shown us that ‘kingship’ must always be at the service of the good of mankind. Therefore, with His grace and in hope of His gift of salvation, let us bear witness to the truth, even when it is unpopular or costly to do so. In this way, we become faithful servants of Christ, preparing the way for His Kingdom, both on earth and in heaven.

What can you do to ensure the protection of religious freedom at home and abroad?

Text the word “Freedom” to 377377 for updates from the bishops on current threats to religious liberty. Also, please visit [www.usccb.org/freedom](http://www.usccb.org/freedom) for more information on how you can protect religious liberty.



# CRISTO REY

## UN REINO QUE DA TESTIMONIO DE LA VERDAD

Cada año, en el último domingo del año litúrgico, celebramos la Solemnidad de Cristo Rey. El Apóstol San Pablo nos enseña: “En [Jesucristo] fueron creadas todas las cosas en el cielo y en la tierra,... y todo tiene en él su consistencia” (Col 1,16-17). Él es el Alfa y la Omega, el Principio y el Fin, el ‘Camino, la Verdad y la Vida’. En efecto, Cristo promete a sus amigos fieles el don de la salvación, la promesa de la vida eterna por medio de su Resurrección. Por lo tanto, la fidelidad a Cristo, nuestro Rey, abre la puerta a la felicidad eterna.

**Origen de la fiesta:** En 1925, mediante su encíclica *Quas Primas*, el Papa Pío XI instituyó la fiesta de Cristo Rey en respuesta al creciente nacionalismo y secularismo –la adoración de “ídolos” del mundo terrenal, tales como el dinero y la fama, por encima de Dios. El Papa tuvo la visión de percibir que el secularismo pronto podría generar mucha hostilidad en contra de la Iglesia. Durante los primeros años del siglo XX, en México, Rusia y otras partes de Europa infiltradas por el secularismo esta desviación amenazaban no solo a la Iglesia Católica sino a la civilización misma. *Quas Primas* renovó en los católicos la esperanza de que, aunque a su alrededor los gobiernos se derrumbaran, el Reino de Cristo duraría para siempre.

**El Reino de Cristo:** Aunque *Quas Primas* fue escrita hace casi 90 años, sigue siendo tan cierta y actual como entonces. Por ejemplo, el secularismo sigue separando a las personas de Dios, como lo demuestra el rechazo de las enseñanzas de la Iglesia y hasta la negación de Dios. Además, datos recientes del Pew Research Center muestran que por todo el mundo se advierte un aumento de las hostilidades religiosas. Ahora más que nunca, debemos celebrar que Jesucristo es el Rey del Universo, incluso en las siguientes maneras:

- **En Cristo, necesitamos preservar nuestros derechos fundamentales.** Jesucristo revela el cumplimiento de las verdades de la creación que se encuentran en el libro del Génesis: “Dios vio que todo cuanto había hecho era muy bueno” (Gen 1,31). Por lo tanto, “hechos a su imagen y semejanza”, cada uno de nosotros posee una bondad incommensurable (Gen 1,26). Esta bondad de Cristo, implantada en el corazón del hombre, nos llama a luchar por lo que por derecho pertenece a cada uno de nosotros: el derecho a la libertad religiosa.



YO DOY TESTIMONIO  
DE LA VERDAD, Y PARA  
ESTO HE NACIDO Y HE  
VENIDO AL MUNDO.

JUAN 18,37

- **En Cristo, necesitamos evangelizar con amor.** Cristo, manso y humilde de corazón, es el perfecto siervo de Dios: mediante su enseñanza y su vida, su intención era la de confirmar, no coaccionar a otros en la fe (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 11). Con nuestras obras cotidianas, sigamos el ejemplo de mostrar la verdad de Cristo a los demás.

- **En Cristo, necesitamos proclamar la verdad.** El Reino de Cristo “da testimonio de la Verdad” (Juan 18,37). Al dar este testimonio, Cristo reconoce la autoridad del gobierno “den al César lo que es del César” (Mateo 22,21). Sin embargo, se nos pide “contradecir al poder público, cuando éste se opon[e] a la santa voluntad de Dios” (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 11).

Dar testimonio de la verdad en esta edad puede ser difícil. Pero Cristo nos ha enseñado que la realeza consiste siempre en servir el bien de la humanidad. Por lo tanto, con su gracia y la esperanza en el don de su salvación, demos testimonio de la verdad, incluso cuando sea impopular o costoso. De esta manera, nos convertimos en verdaderos siervos de Cristo que preparan Su Reino en la Tierra y en Cielo.

¿Qué puede hacer para asegurar la protección de la libertad religiosa?

Envía texto **LIBERTAD** al 377377 para recibir actualizaciones de los obispos sobre amenazas actuales a la libertad religiosa. ¡También, visite [www.usccb.org/freedom](http://www.usccb.org/freedom) para más información y como participar para proteger la libertad religiosa!