"Grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise."

Opening Prayer of the Mass

In many ways, these words from the Opening Prayer of today's Mass sum up what the feast of Christ the King is about: 'we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.' We know Christ to be our Universal King, but what does this mean in practice? It means that the whole of creation – you, me, all the members of our society and nation, and indeed all the nations of the world, and even the material objects of the universe – are all duty-bound to give to God the praise and adoration which He is owed.

How does a river or a mountain or a distant planet give praise to God? The answer is, quite simply, by being what it was created to be and by doing what it was created to do. An orange tree praises God by being an orange tree and producing oranges. And that applies to us also. We were created to know, love, and serve God in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. And if we do that, then we are doing what we were created for, and our lives become hymns of praise sung in honour of our God and King. In effect, the prayers of today's feast pray that we might, with the help of God's grace, and in the words of a famous prayer[1], spend our whole lives in praising God by knowing Him more clearly, loving Him more dearly, and following Him more nearly, day by day.

In the first instance, it is our duty to see Christ enthroned in our own hearts, by which we mean that we are willing to surrender our hearts and minds to Him, to conform our will to His will, and to conform our souls to His likeness, becoming more like to Christ as the days go by through prayer and a life of virtue.

[1] The Prayer of St Richard of Chichester.

Second, it is our duty to enthrone Christ in our homes. Through signs and symbols – such as crucifixes and images of Christ and His Blessed Mother and the saints – we must make our homes places where Christ is welcome and where He is given the place of honour. Whether we live alone or with others, prayer must be given priority in our homes, with morning and evening prayers a particular feature of our daily lives, even – and perhaps especially – when family and friends come to stay who are not fellow believers. Welcoming guests into our home must never be a reason for hiding our Catholic Faith or for not getting to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days. Our homes and our families are the cornerstones of society. If our households are houses of prayer, and our homes have Christ at their heart, then our society can begin to be transformed too.

And third, it is indeed our duty to work towards the enthronement of Christ as King of our society and our nation. The Church's doctrine of the Social Kingship of Christ[2] teaches us that the world which was created by and through Christ is, by rights, to be governed according to His laws and His commandments. Even in non-Catholic countries, all governments have a duty to govern according to God's laws, and it is our duty as Catholics to work towards a society whose laws are shaped by the laws of Christ our King.[3] What does this mean in practice? First, it means praying for our country that all may come to welcome the reign of Christ and do Him homage. It also means that we have a duty to participate in the political life of our country, at least by voting in general and local elections, reading the leaflets and finding out who we think is the best candidate, and then voting for him or her. It can also mean getting involved in political parties and influencing the policy making processes even if it is only at a

[2] See Pope Pius XI's encyclical of 1925, *Quas Primas*.
[3] Two key books worth reading on the Social Kingship of Christ are: *Christ the King* by Dom Jean de Monléon, OSB, published by Te Deum Press; and *An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine* by Fr Dominique Bourmaud, published by the Angelus Press.

very low level; or it can mean getting involved in campaigns for changes in the law or to prevent objectionable laws from being introduced in the first place. It might involve writing to our MPs or local councillors. The Catholic Church does not tell people which political party to vote for or against. Instead, She asks us to make sure we understand what the Church teaches, and then to act on that teaching according to whichever candidates or parties come closest to upholding God's law. It may not be a straightforward or simple process, but we must do what we can.

Today, we can make a start at enthroning Christ as King by spending time before Him in the Most Holy Eucharist. The Blessed Sacrament will be enthroned on our altar throughout the whole of Sunday afternoon so that we might come and kneel before Him in adoration and homage, and surrender our hearts, our homes, and our society to His reign, praying that – as it says in one of the psalms – our hearts might be inclined to God's will (Ps 118:36). This seems a fitting way to prepare for the start of Advent which, in turn, helps us to prepare for the coming of our King into our world in Bethlehem at Christmas.