In honor of the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Church celebrates most solemnly today, we offer readers the following excerpts from Pope Pius XI's magnificent Encyclical *Quas Primas* (Dec. 11, 1925) by which he instituted "the Feast of the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be observed yearly throughout the whole world on the last Sunday of the month of October — the Sunday, that is, which immediately precedes the Feast of All Saints" (n. 28).

*Sacred Heart of Jesus, may Thy Kingdom come! Immaculate Heart of Mary, may thy triumph come!*

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Venerable Brethren, Greeting and the Apostolic Benediction.

In the first Encyclical Letter which We addressed at the beginning of Our Pontificate to the Bishops of the universal Church [*Ubi Arcano*], We referred to the chief causes of the difficulties under which mankind was laboring. And We remember saying that these manifold evils in the world were due to the fact that the majority of men had thrust Jesus Christ and His holy law out of their lives; that these had no place either in private affairs or in politics: and We said further, that as long as individuals and states refused to submit to the rule of our Savior, there would be no really hopeful prospect of a lasting peace among nations. Men must look for the *peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ*; and that We promised to do as far as lay in Our power. *In the Kingdom of Christ*, that is, it seemed to Us that peace could not be more effectually restored nor fixed upon a firmer basis than through the restoration of the Empire of Our Lord. We were led in the meantime to indulge the hope of a brighter future at the sight of a more widespread and keener interest evinced in Christ and His Church, the one Source of Salvation, a sign that men who had formerly spurned the rule of our Redeemer and had exiled themselves from His Kingdom were preparing, and even hastening, to return to the duty of obedience.

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8. Do we not read throughout the Scriptures that Christ is the King? He it is that shall come out of Jacob to rule [Num. 24:19], Who has been set by the Father as King over Sion, His holy mount, and shall have the Gentiles for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession.[Ps. 2] In the nuptial hymn, where the future King of Israel is hailed as a most rich and powerful monarch, we read: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the scepter of thy kingdom is a scepter of righteousness."[Ps. 44] There are many similar passages, but there is one in which Christ is even more clearly indicated. Here it is foretold that His Kingdom will have no limits, and will be enriched with justice and peace: "in His

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days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace…And He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."[Ps. 71]

9. The testimony of the Prophets is even more abundant. That of Isaias is well known: "For a Child is born to us and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God the mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace. He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and for ever."[Isa. 9:6-7] With Isaias the other Prophets are in agreement. So Jeremias foretells the "just seed" that shall rest from the house of David – the Son of David that shall reign as king, "and shall be wise, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."[Jer. 23:5] So, too, Daniel, who announces the kingdom that the God of heaven shall found, "that shall never be destroyed, and shall stand for ever."[Dan. 2:44] And again he says: "I beheld, therefore, in the vision of the night, and, lo! one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. And He came even to the Ancient of days: and they presented Him before Him. And He gave Him power and glory and a kingdom: and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed."[Dan. 7:13-14] The prophecy of Zachary concerning the merciful King "riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass" entering Jerusalem as "the just and savior," amid the acclamations of the multitude,[Zach. 9:9] was recognized as fulfilled by the holy evangelists themselves.

10. This same doctrine of the Kingship of Christ which we have found in the Old Testament is even more clearly taught and confirmed in the New. The Archangel, announcing to the Virgin that she should bear a Son, says that "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."[Luke 1:32-33]

11. Moreover, Christ Himself speaks of His own kingly authority: in His last discourse, speaking of the rewards and punishments that will be the eternal lot of the just and the damned [Matt. 25:31-46]; in His reply to the Roman magistrate, who asked Him publicly whether he were a king or not [John 18:33-37]; after His Resurrection, when giving to His Apostles the mission of teaching and baptizing all nations, He took the opportunity to call Himself king, confirming the title publicly, and solemnly proclaimed that all power was given Him in heaven and on earth.[Matt. 28:18-20] These words can only be taken to indicate the greatness of His power, the infinite extent of His kingdom. What wonder, then, that he whom St. John calls the "prince of the kings of the earth"[Apoc. 1:5] appears in the Apostle's vision of the future as He Who "hath on His garment and on His thigh written

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'King of kings and Lord of lords!'"[Apoc. 19:16] It is Christ Whom the Father "hath appointed heir of all things"[Heb. 1:2]; "for He must reign until at the end of the world He hath put all His enemies under the feet of God and the Father."[1 Cor. 15:25]

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15. This Kingdom is spiritual and is concerned with spiritual things. That this is so the above quotations from Scripture amply prove, and Christ by His own action confirms it. On many occasions, when the Jews and even the Apostles wrongly supposed that the Messiah would restore the liberties and the kingdom of Israel, He repelled and denied such a suggestion. When the populace thronged around Him in admiration and would have acclaimed Him King, He shrank from the honor and sought safety in flight. Before the Roman magistrate He declared that His Kingdom was *not of this world*. The Gospels present this kingdom as one which men prepare to enter by penance, and cannot actually enter except by faith and by baptism, which, though an external rite, signifies and produces an interior regeneration. This kingdom is opposed to none other than to that of Satan and to the power of darkness. It demands of its subjects a spirit of detachment from riches and earthly things, and a spirit of gentleness. They must hunger and thirst after justice, and more than this, they must deny themselves and carry the cross.

16. Christ as our Redeemer purchased the Church at the price of His own Blood; as Priest He offered Himself, and continues to offer Himself as a Victim for our sins. Is it not evident, then, that his kingly dignity partakes in a manner of both these offices?

17. It would be a grave error, on the other hand, to say that Christ has no authority whatever in civil affairs, since, by virtue of the absolute empire over all creatures committed to Him by the Father, all things are in His power. Nevertheless, during His life on earth he refrained from the exercise of such authority, and although He Himself disdained to possess or to care for earthly goods, He did not, nor does He today, interfere with those who possess them. *Non eripit mortalia qui regna dat caelestia*. [Hymn for the Epiphany]

18. Thus the empire of our Redeemer embraces all men. To use the words of Our immortal predecessor, Pope Leo XIII: "His empire includes not only Catholic nations, not only baptized persons who, though of right belonging to the Church, have been led astray by error, or have been cut off from her by schism, but also all those who are outside the Christian faith; so that truly the whole of mankind is subject to the power of Jesus Christ."[*Annum Sacrum*, n. 3] Nor is there any difference in this matter between the individual and the family or the State; for all men, whether collectively or individually, are under the dominion of Christ. In Him is the salvation of the individual, in Him is the salvation of society. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other Name

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under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."[Acts 4:12] He is the author of happiness and true prosperity for every man and for every nation. "For a nation is happy when its citizens are happy. What else is a nation but a number of men living in concord?"[S. Aug. *Ep. ad Macedonium,* c. iii.] If, therefore, the rulers of nations wish to preserve their authority, to promote and increase the prosperity of their countries, they will not neglect the public duty of reverence and obedience to the rule of Christ. What We said at the beginning of Our Pontificate concerning the decline of public authority, and the lack of respect for the same, is equally true at the present day. "With God and Jesus Christ," We said, "excluded from political life, with authority derived not from God but from man, the very basis of that authority has been taken away, because the chief reason of the distinction between ruler and subject has been eliminated. The result is that human society is tottering to its fall, because it has no longer a secure and solid foundation."[*Ubi Arcano*, n. 28]

19. When once men recognize, both in private and in public life, that Christ is King, society will at last receive the great blessings of real liberty, well-ordered discipline, peace and harmony. Our Lord's regal office invests the human authority of princes and rulers with a religious significance; it ennobles the citizen's duty of obedience. It is for this reason that St. Paul, while bidding wives revere Christ in their husbands, and slaves respect Christ in their masters, warns them to give obedience to them not as men, but as the vicegerents of Christ; for it is not meet that men redeemed by Christ should serve their fellow-men. "You are bought with a price; be not made the bond-slaves of men."[1 Cor. 7:23] If princes and magistrates duly elected are filled with the persuasion that they rule, not by their own right, but by the mandate and in the place of the Divine King, they will exercise their authority piously and wisely, and they will make laws and administer them, having in view the common good and also the human dignity of their subjects. The result will be a stable peace and tranquility, for there will be no longer any cause of discontent. Men will see in their king or in their rulers men like themselves, perhaps unworthy or open to criticism, but they will not on that account refuse obedience if they see reflected in them the authority of Christ, God and Man. Peace and harmony, too, will result; for with the spread and the universal extent of the Kingdom of Christ, men will become more and more conscious of the link that binds them together, and thus many conflicts will be either prevented entirely or at least their bitterness will be diminished.

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28. Therefore, by Our Apostolic Authority We institute the Feast of the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ to be observed yearly throughout the whole world on the last Sunday of the month of October – the Sunday, that is, which immediately precedes the Feast of All Saints. We further ordain that the dedication of mankind to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which Our

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predecessor of saintly memory, Pope Pius X, commanded to be renewed yearly, be made annually on that day. This year [1925], however, We desire that it be observed on the thirty-first day of the month on which day We Ourselves shall celebrate pontifically in honor of the Kingship of Christ, and shall command that the same dedication be performed in Our presence. It seems to Us that We cannot in a more fitting manner close this Holy Year [Jubilee of 1925], nor better signify Our gratitude and that of the whole of the Catholic world to Christ the immortal King of ages, for the blessings showered upon Us, upon the Church, and upon the Catholic world during this holy period.

*See here for the full text of Quas Primas.*

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*We have received the food of immortality and beg, Lord, that we, who are proud to fight under the banner of Christ our King, may reign with Him forever in His realm above: Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, for ever and ever. Amen.*
(Feast of Christ the King, Postcommunion, 1962 Roman Missal)

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