

“I gazed into the visions of the night.”
Daniel 7:13

Much has been said of Christ the King over the last four weeks and now, on the feast itself, we can round up our thoughts and consider what we might do to make Christ our King in reality.

Whether we think in terms of Christ’s kingship over our society, and the need for us to take action in the public square, for example by writing to our MPs regarding the Assisted Suicide Bill that is now before parliament, or whether we think in terms of our spiritual lives, and the need to place ourselves before His throne through our prayers, we need to ask God for the virtue of prudence.

Prudence is one of the four cardinal virtues, along with justice, fortitude, and temperance. It is the most practical of all the virtues. The virtue of wisdom enables us to see as God sees, and shows us the truth of things. Prudence helps us with the practical application of wisdom: it enlightens our minds and enables us to see what we must actually *do*, and then points us towards actually *doing* it!

First, then, we must surrender our hearts and our minds to Christ the King, welcoming Him into our souls so that He may take His place on the throne of our hearts. We do this chiefly through a devout sacramental Confession and a prayerful consecration of ourselves to His Kingship.

But our becoming subject to His reign cannot end there. Having placed ourselves at His service, we must then get on and serve Him, and in practical ways. In other words, with the help of His grace, we must change how we behave towards Him and towards our neighbour, for there is none of us that does not need to change something about his or her life.

In the first instance, this means paying attention to our habitual sins which offend Him, and working on trying to turn our vices into virtues instead, habits such as anger, or impatience, or the use of bad language, or impurity, or idleness, or selfishness, or a love of sensuality and comfort. Regular and frequent Confession is the surest means of doing this, along with a thorough and honest examination of conscience which allows us to admit to ourselves what our faults really are.

Next, we must pray. Each time we find ourselves falling back into one of our bad habits we should immediately whisper a prayer under our breath, saying sorry to God, assuring Him that we *do* love Him, and asking for His grace once more.

Third, we should make practical efforts towards change, whether this means adapting our routine of prayer, or beginning a routine of prayer if we do not already have one, getting to church early enough to make a devout act of preparation before Mass and staying after Mass long enough to make a proper act of thanksgiving; or whether this practical change means taking up some good work on behalf of others. We might do well to start with such habits as affect those around us: habits of irritability or short temper, impatience or annoyance, at home or in the workplace. And then, especially during Advent and Christmastide perhaps, take up some charitable work, and help others who are in need, either locally and in a very practical way, or through the sponsorship of a chosen charity that works on their behalf.

Even the richest of prayer lives will bear little fruit if it is not wrapped about with the gift of love towards our neighbour, be he or she at home and very near to us or farther afield.

Advent begins next Sunday. Many of us will get caught up in the pagan Yuletide preparations out there. They are fun and colourful and exciting. But one of the best ways to start making Christ the King of your lives is to invite Him into your

homes this Advent season by holding some of the Yuletide razzmatazz at arm's length. Light the candles of your own Advent wreath at home, or open the doors of an Advent wreath, *without* chocolates, day by day. Play Advent music instead of Christmas music. Build your Christmas crib at home gradually over the next three weeks or so, putting the figures into place one at a time and leaving the Christ child until Christmas morning; and, perhaps, don't put up your tree until Christmas Eve. After all, it is Advent until 24th December. Christmas itself only starts with Midnight Mass, and lasts until the Epiphany on 6th January.

In other words, be different from other people. Keep Christmas instead of Yuletide. Welcome Christ the King into the heart of your homes, and don't pack Him up again, when Christmas is over, with all the tinsel and glitter and put Him back in the cupboard until next year.

Do not become so consumed with the material delights of the season that you forget those in need, here in Ipswich or elsewhere.

And above all pray. Pray your way through Advent rather than shop your way through Advent. Gaze into the visions of the night as the prophet Daniel did in today's first reading, and keep your hearts and minds fixed above, on God and the things of God.