

**“He is the image of the invisible God.”
Col 1:15**

The great thirteenth century Franciscan saint and theologian, St Bonaventure, was one of the great thinkers and writers of the Middle Ages. He died in 1274, the same year as the Dominican theologian St Thomas Aquinas. Both of them were declared Doctors of the Church: St Thomas is known as the Angelic Doctor, perhaps because he wrote so extensively about the Angels, or because of the sublime nature of his writings and the purity of his life, whilst St Bonaventure is known as the Seraphic Doctor because of his profound and burning love of God, the Seraphs – or seraphim – being those angels who burn. That is, after all, what the word seraph means: ‘those who burn.’

It was St Bonaventure who said that when God said, ‘Let us make man to our image and likeness’ (Gen 1:26), He had in mind the Incarnate Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ. So, although Christ was not yet born, of course, Adam was nonetheless modelled on the Person of Christ. In other words, Christ, who St Paul tells us in today’s Second Reading, is ‘the image of the invisible God,’ is also the image of who and what each of us were meant to be.

Fast forward to today’s feast of Christ the King. Chiefly, this feast both declares and celebrates the fact that Christ is Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, and that He – and He alone – has the right and the authority to rule over the nations of the world and to govern the right ordering of our society. In practice, this means that we, His creatures, are duty bound to legislate, at international, national, and local levels, in accordance with what God Himself has revealed to us and has laid down in His precepts and commandments. In other words, our laws should be shaped according to the will of God: Christian justice and morality should be enshrined in the laws of the land.

Bizarrely, we are nowadays more familiar with this concept in the context of Islamic countries which are governed by Sharia law. But it has always been the case, in Christian theology, that our way of life should be shaped according to Christian principles, and that the laws of the land should reflect and enact these principles.

Closer to home, our own households should be shaped according to Catholic teaching so that it is Christ Our Lord who is ruler of our hearts and our minds, our homes and our families. And the beginning of Advent next Sunday is a good time to think about how we can enshrine Christ in our Catholic homes as sovereign and Lord. What can we do to make Him King?

First, we can adopt the mindset of St Bonaventure, and see Christ as the model, the template, of who and what we are meant to be; of who and what God always intended that we should be. And if we are to see Christ as the template for our lives, we have to get to know Him better, for example by reading the Gospels, the Letters of the New Testament, and the Prophecies of the Old Testament; by reading old fashioned lives of Christ that were so popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but which, in one form or another, have been with us for so many years¹; and by reading the lives of the saints who, in this life, made Christ the model for their thoughts, and words, and deeds, and who now live with Him in eternal glory in heaven.

Second, we can make our homes into Catholic homes. We do not have to turn our homes into mini churches or chapels, but we should have crucifixes and Catholic images around our home, a holy water stoop just inside our front door so that we can bless ourselves with Holy Water as we come and go, and Catholic books on our shelves. See the Holy Year suggestion box on the back page of the newsletter. Every

¹ Go to the St Pancras parish website, scroll down the home page to the *Suggested Reading* section, and click on 'Lives of Our Lord.'

week throughout the Holy Year there have been ‘Top tips for making an ordinary home into a Catholic home!’

Third, make use of Advent prayers and devotions. There are many different little books of Advent reflections and meditations, deliberately short for people with busy lives, to help you deepen your spiritual life at this time instead of just getting lost in the preparations for the secular Yuletide. Perhaps make use of our own devotional booklets?

And fourth, and most importantly, get to Confession. It is always a good idea to get to Confession at least once a month anyway. Many people go more often than that, every fortnight or even every week. But whether you go to Confession frequently, or haven’t been for a while, make sure you get to Confession at least once between the start of Advent and Christmas Day. There is no better way to re-shape ourselves into the likeness of Christ than to bow down in humility before our God, just as the Son of God Himself emptied Himself of all the appurtenances of divine glory and bowed down before the will of His Father.

If we hope to enter into Christ’s heavenly kingdom after we die then we need to make Him King of our lives in this world first, and bow down before His majesty and might, before His justice and His sovereignty.