



Christus Rex
by Hans von Kulmbach,
c. 1514–1518.



**BISHOP
JOHN O.
BARRES**

is the fifth bishop
of the Diocese of
Rockville Centre.

His writings
are available at
bishopbarres.com.

BISHOP BARRES' STATEMENT ON THE CENTENNIAL OF THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, we give thanks for the centennial of the Solemnity of Christ the King, which we mark this Sunday, November 23, 2025. The establishment of this solemn feast day by Pope Pius XI at the conclusion of the Holy Year 1925 unleashed a wave of sanctity and missionary activity across the globe. On this anniversary of Christ the King, we recall the cry of Blessed Miguel Pro and the heroic *Cristeros* who resisted the violent atheistic regime threatening to undermine the Mexican people: ¡Viva Cristo Rey! We too cry out with them on this day: ¡Viva Cristo Rey! Long live Christ the King!

The challenges which confronted the Church one hundred years ago are not very different from the challenges facing our world today: a growing sense of political and economic turmoil; global conflict and war; the erosion of religious liberty; and rising secularism at home and abroad. Today, we rejoice in hope even amid these serious difficulties because we know that true peace, justice, and harmony can be found in the Kingship of Christ.

In his encyclical letter establishing the liturgical Feast of Christ the King, *Quas Primas*, Pope Pius XI warned the faithful about mistaken political and philosophical movements which sought to remove the teachings of Christ from the public

square: "It would be a grave error...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."¹

How often do we hear in our own day the dissonant voices of many in our culture who argue that religion must be removed from public life? Pope Pius XI rightly recognized that when religion is pushed out of the public square, a new and more violent religion of secular atheism takes its place:

Some [regimes] went even further, and wished to set up in the place of God's religion a natural religion consisting in some instinctive affection of the heart. There were even some nations who thought they could dispense with God, and that their religion should consist in impiety and the neglect of God. The rebellion of individuals and states against the authority of Christ has produced deplorable consequences...the seeds of discord sown far and wide; those bitter enmities and rivalries between nations, which still hinder so much the cause of peace.²

It is important to note that Pope Pius XI understood that God was being removed from the public square not only within the rising communist regimes of his day, but also within Western democracies. This was equally



Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro
executed by firing squad,
November 23, 1927.



Pope Pius XI
by Josef B. Malina, 1930.

troubling. For when democracies remove God from public life, objective truth gives way to subjective opinions, and citizens are left only to look inward toward themselves and risk confusing the creature with the Creator, the citizen with the King.

In short, Pope Pius XI was reminding the world about the *limits of the political order*. How important this is to remember. There is something beyond politics that has the ultimate claim on the human heart. Politics serves not as an end in itself, not as humanity's highest loyalty and love, but as the means for men and women to work out their redemption so as to choose freely their ultimate reward of eternal life. It was to remind the atheistic revolutionaries of these limits to the political order that Blessed Miguel Pro cried out: ¡Viva Cristo Rey! For Christ alone demands our ultimate loyalty and trust.

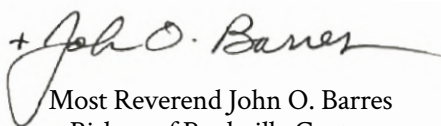
The centennial of the Solemnity of Christ the King also reminds us of the importance of the Church's liturgy in public life. Pope Pius XI, in establishing the Feast of Christ the King, demonstrates the connection between liturgy and political life. This feast day manifests the provocative Christian belief that Christ's Kingship is not only reserved to the private worship of Sunday Mass attendees but extends outward to the entire world and indeed to the entire cosmos. As Pope Pius XI stated: "In [Christ] is the salvation of the individual, in him is the salvation of society."³ And as his predecessor Pope Leo XIII proclaimed: "[Christ's] empire extends not only over Catholic nations and those...washed in the waters of holy baptism...; it comprises also all those who are deprived of the Christian faith, so that the whole human race is most truly under the power of Jesus Christ."⁴

To emphasize the cosmic reality of Christ's Kingship, Pope Pius XI wished to establish the Feast of Christ the King on the last Sunday of October since, being toward the end of the liturgical year, "the feast of the Kingship of Christ sets the crowning glory upon the mysteries of the life of Christ already commemorated during the year."⁵ Likewise, the Pope wished for the feast day to be near the Solemnity of All Saints for "we proclaim and extol the glory of him who triumphs in all the Saints..."⁶ The liturgical calendar today places the Solemnity of Christ the King on the last Sunday in Ordinary Time to reveal even more intensely this cosmic dimension of Christ's kingship, for Christ rules not only here in the hearts of men and women, but also over the angels and saints in heaven.

The concerns of Pope Pius XI in the Holy Year 1925 are echoed in the statements of his successor Pope Leo XIV in the Holy Year 2025. Pope Leo XIV, in his inaugural homily, made this heartfelt appeal for peace by urging the faithful to lift their attention to Christ:

We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to his offer of love and become his one family: *in the one Christ, we are one*. This is the path to follow together, among ourselves but also with our sister Christian churches, with those who follow other religious paths, with those who are searching for God, with all women and men of good will, in order to build a new world where peace reigns!

May we, on this great Solemnity of Christ the King, respond to the call of our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV and look to Christ who is the one and true King. ¡Viva Cristo Rey!


Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of Rockville Centre



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

¹ Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, 17.

² Ibid, 24.

³ Ibid, 18.

⁴ Leo XIII, *Annum Sacrum*, 3.

⁵ Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, 29.

⁶ Ibid.