

Q *The liturgical year ends with the feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. What is the significance of this feast?*

A Kings and kingdoms are not part of the American cultural or political experience. Human beings in general—and Americans in particular—tend to resist and oppose any institution that does not allow people to play an active part in the decision-making process. Yet with this last Sunday in ordinary time, we celebrate the feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

The feast was begun by Pope Pius XI in 1925 to counter atheism and secularism. Pius wanted to communicate the belief that Jesus is lord of all, the king of creation. The biblical reality, however, is that Jesus is not a king like the kings of this world. These kings “lord” it over their people exercising power, at times without restraint. Jesus is lord indeed; yet he came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life for the sake of all. A monarchical reign is not a characteristic of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed is one in which all people are treated with dignity, and valued for who and what they are. It is a kingdom that actively cares for the poor, the homeless, the alienated, and the oppressed, as it mobilizes to establish justice and a right relationship with all. This is what every institution that models itself on Jesus the king has to be about. As we celebrate this feast, let us pray that all institutions, especially the church, model themselves on Jesus’ servant leadership.