



Diocese of Whitehorse
BISHOP'S OFFICE

Pastoral Letter for the First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Church always ends the liturgical year with the Feast of Christ, King of the Universe. For a moment on the cross, it seemed that Jesus would die a meaningless and violent death, but yet God surprised us again by lifting Him up and crowning Him with glory. Jesus' first royal act was to save the soul of one, who though a criminal, recognized Jesus as the King and realized that forgiveness was offered to all.

Jesus started His reign from the throne of the cross, of total self-giving; a throne where love conquered all pain and suffering. And His exclamation "today you will be in paradise" is addressed to all of us, offering us a life with meaning and purpose; that is, to reign with Him and to build His kingdom here on Earth: "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace" (Eucharistic Preface).

Advent, which we are beginning today, invites us to live our baptismal consecration as co-kings with Christ to its fullness. It is a time of re-awakening our spirits to this great reality of Jesus' mysterious plan to save the world through doing nothing more than good, regardless of the cost.

It is a time when we also remember that Jesus made the claim to His kingdom in the very act of incarnation: Where He exchanged His heavenly dwelling for this earthly valley of tears, His Father's presence for our company, worship of angels for human derision, and perfect happiness for a very human life of joy but also suffering and pain. "By his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin" (Saint Pope John Paul II).

Thus, our King is not a distant figure far superior to us, but the One who is intimately present in everything we face in our daily lives. He is the King who does not consider it beyond His dignity to scoop down into our very lives and experience with us poverty, pain, loneliness, helplessness, and injustice. In every difficulty we invoke His name with faith knowing that He is always close at hand. When we are sick, He is sick with us; when we struggle He struggles with us; when we are overwhelmed, He makes "our yoke sweet, and our burden light".

We believe that the Lord will come at the end of times in His glory precisely because we experience His coming daily. Yet in this present world there are many other false kingdoms that offer success, popularity, and wealth at the cost of compromising the truth. There are false kings who, though powerful and influential, cannot offer eternal life. Through various ideologies they try to fix this world, and yet they reject the One who is "the truth, the life and the way". Many lies are being promoted, and many false promises are made.

I must also mention our “throw away culture”, which celebrates greed and a shallow way of living our lives. His Holiness Pope Francis sums it well in these words: “Where the only law is the bottom line of profit at the end of the day, nothing holds us back from seeing others simply as objects to be exploited; other people are merely a means to an end” (World Day of the Poor, November 11, 2022). In our world today, we are also experiencing a significant ideological colonization whereby men and women become an end to themselves.

Let us awake! “Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, by fitting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace, and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Eph 6:14-16). Let us denounce everything in our lives that does not bring good fruits. Let us examine carefully our thoughts and feelings which the enemy is using to sow the seeds of deceit, jealousy or competition among us. Let us strive to desire His coming in glory and fight our attachment to this passing world. Let us be at peace with each other so that the Lord may find us one as He was one with the Father. Let us come together and gather without fear around the altar of the Lord in peace and harmony blessing God for all the goodness we have received from Him.

We also cannot forget in this time our brothers and sisters all around the world who are suffering from war, particularly in Ukraine. Our prayers go to those who carry the burden of governing so they will seek at all cost the end of the violence. We also remember the poorest in every sense among our own very neighbours so that Christ may be born among them.

May this coming new year be truly God’s year in our lives. As we journey together to this end may Advent be, for you and all of us, a hopeful and joyous time with the Lord! Let the Light Shine!

May God bless each and everyone of you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a plus sign followed by the name 'Héctor Vila' in a cursive script.

+ Héctor Vila