

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Father Max Oliva, S.J.

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My Vocation took me by surprise! One day I was in my office at the food cannery in San Jose, California where I heard the words, "I think I want to be a priest." And, one month later I entered the Jesuit Novitiate. And 15 days after that the other First Year Novices and I began what is known as The Long Retreat: 30 days meditating on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

After a few days of wondering about the wisdom of what I had done – leaving my bachelor life and all of its perks – to join a Religious Order, and while on the Long Retreat, I was introduced to the meditation: *The Call of Christ the King*. This meditation confirmed me in my decision.

There are two parts to this meditation. First, you consider a temporal king, or leader, and how he or she wants to make the world a better place. This was early November of 1963 so I chose President John F Kennedy to be my inspiring leader. Recall these words from him: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Next, Ignatius has you consider the call of *Christ the King*. Here is part of this meditation: "If a human leader can have such an appeal to us, how much greater is the attraction of the Son of God. He makes this appeal: "It is my will to win over the whole world, to conquer sin, hatred, and death. Whoever wishes to join me in this mission must be willing to labor with me so that by following me in suffering, they may follow me in glory."

This Call really caught my imagination, much as it has for many men and women who have made the Exercises. It still does.

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There are many images for Jesus Christ. One of them is prominently posed in our First Reading and in the Responsorial Psalm: Shepherd: "*As a shepherd tends his flock, so will I tend my sheep,*" says the Lord (Father and Son). "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*" Words such as care, provide, rescue, pasture, and heal help us to put our life in his Hands.

The *Call of Christ the King* is not a "me and Jesus only" relationship. As we heard in the Gospel, there is a strong emphasis on reaching out to people who are distressed: hungry, thirsty, in need of clothing, in prison, in a country not their own (the stranger), and so forth. We call these the "Corporal Works of Mercy."

Mother Teresa used to counsel her Sisters to go out and minister to "Jesus in all his distressing disguises" – the destitute, lepers, those in great need.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel: "whatever you did for one of the least brothers/sisters of mine, you did for me."

CONCLUSION

Let us pray:

For the grace of empathy
And the gift of compassion.
For the courage never to disown
the poor.
May we draw closer to Christ the King
each day in mind, heart, and spirit. **AMEN.**