

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

One of the talking points in America's "culture wars" at present is "Christian Nationalism". This is the idea that America is a historically Christian nation and that our Christian identity and culture should be defended and promoted.

There is a spectrum of positions: from those who simply believe the underlying American culture and values are rooted in the Christian faith, and that this is a good thing-- to those who believe the entire political, educational and cultural framework should be dominated by Christians with the intent of establishing a completely Christian culture.

The Solemnity of Christ the King gives us the opportunity to ponder these ideologies. What does our Church teach about our relationship to the worldly powers? It is rooted in Our Lord's simple instruction to "render under Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". This submission to the powers that be are re-affirmed by St Paul's teaching in Romans 13 where he writes, "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established." In his first epistle to Timothy, he says we should "pray for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." Considering the fact that he wrote this during the reign of Nero—one of history's most immoral and tyrannical monsters makes us wonder!

Our submission to the powers that be does not mean we may not lawfully protest injustice, immorality and criminal activity, and we should be aware that history informs us that the more the secular powers depart from Christian values the more they will perceive Christians as the enemy.

On this Solemnity of Christ the King, as Catholics, we can affirm the Christian values on which our nation is founded, but we reject the extreme position that we should impose our religion on others. One of the Christian values on which our country is founded is freedom of religion. If we enjoy freedom of religion, it is right to affirm it for others too. To summarize: Christ is our King. The secular powers are there for us to be obedient to them, but also for them to concede that ultimately, we serve a higher power.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker