



## ✦ Bosco MacDonald Bishop of Clifton

### Pastoral Letter for the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this last Sunday in the liturgical year we celebrate the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. It's a beautiful reminder of the majesty and sovereignty of Jesus Christ who emptied himself and came to us as Servant King. This celebration invites us to reflect on His reign, not only in the world but also in our hearts. Today, I would like to focus our attention on a central aspect of our faith that nourishes and sustains us: the Word of God, especially as it is proclaimed and lived in the liturgy.

The Word of God is not merely a historical document or a collection of ancient writings. As Catholics, we believe that Scripture is the living Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit and relevant to every generation. When we hear the Scriptures proclaimed in the liturgy, it is God Himself who speaks to us. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, "the Church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's Body" (Dei Verbum, 21). In every Mass, through both Word and Sacrament, we encounter Christ in a profound and transformative way.

At Mass, after gathering in prayer, we enter into what is known as the Liturgy of the Word. This part of the Mass is not simply a reading session; it is a sacred dialogue between God and His people. Through Scripture readings, psalms, and homilies, God speaks to us, inviting us to listen with open hearts. We then respond through prayer, reflection, and ultimately by allowing His Word to shape our lives.

On Sundays and Solemnities such as today's feast of Christ the King, we are blessed with three readings: one from the Old Testament (or Acts of the Apostles during Easter), one from the New Testament letters, and finally a reading from one of the Gospels. These readings are carefully chosen to reflect a unified theme that leads us deeper into communion with God. The high point of this dialogue is when we stand to hear the Gospel proclaimed—honouring Christ's words with reverence and joy.

The proclamation of Scripture during Mass has a unique sacramental power. It is not just an intellectual exercise. It brings about what it proclaims. As we listen attentively to God's Word, it has the power to transform us from within. The Scriptures call us to conversion, challenge us to live more faithfully as disciples of Christ, and comfort us with God's promises.

In this way, every Mass is an opportunity for spiritual renewal. The Word proclaimed becomes alive within us as we allow it to take root in our hearts. It prepares us for what follows—the celebration of the Eucharist—where Christ becomes truly present under the forms of bread and wine. So there is an intimate connection between Word and Sacrament. Both nourish our souls and lead us into deeper communion with God.

Today's Solemnity reminds us that Christ reigns not through worldly power or domination but through His life-giving Word. His kingship is one of truth and love—a reign that invites each one of us into His kingdom by listening to His voice. Jesus tells us in today's Gospel that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Yet He rules over all creation through His Word—a Word that brings salvation, healing, and peace.

As members of His Church, we are called to be attentive listeners and faithful doers of His Word. Let this Feast be an invitation for all of us to renew our commitment to hearing God's voice in Scripture—not only during Mass but also in our daily lives.

From the First Sunday of Advent next week, a new translation of the Lectionary comes into use in our Catholic parishes in England and Wales and Scotland. Some of the readings at Mass which have become so memorable to our ears that we can speak them by heart, will perhaps sound unfamiliar again. This gives us the opportunity to listen with fresh ears, so to speak, and to deepen our relationship with Scripture once again.

The more familiar we are with God's Word, the more fully we will be able to participate in the liturgy. Pope Benedict XVI reminded us: "The entire liturgy is steeped in Scripture" (*Verbum Domini*, 52). When we know Scripture well, we can more fruitfully receive Christ—both in His proclaimed Word and in Holy Communion.

Our response to God's Word must go beyond hearing to listening; and our listening must lead to contemplation and action. Just as Christ reigns by serving others, so too we live out His teachings by serving those around us—especially those most in need.

As we celebrate this feast of Christ the King today, we give thanks for the gift of God's Word that guides us on our journey toward eternal life. May we always approach Scripture with reverence and openness so that Christ may reign ever more fully in our hearts. And may Christ our King bless you and your loved ones abundantly as we approach the Season of Advent.

With my prayers, best wishes and thanks for all you do to encourage one another in faith,



+Bosco  
Bishop of Clifton

To be read and made available in all parishes of the Clifton Diocese  
on the weekend of the 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> November 2024