

The Feast of Christ the King was instituted by Pius XI in 1925 in his encyclical *Quas Primas*. It was written in the aftermath of World War I, which saw the fall of several imperial dynasties: the Hohenzollerns, Romanovs, Habsburgs, and the Ottoman Turks. In contrast, the pope pointed to Christ's kingdom as an everlasting and universal one that will never fall. In the encyclical he writes: "... the Word of God, as consubstantial with the Father, has all things in common with him, and therefore has necessarily supreme and absolute dominion over all things created."

I still find it hard to understand what a necessary 'supreme and absolute dominion over all things created' could mean. 'Dominion' means to rule over, have charge of, to possess ascendancy, authority and sway. I can't comfortably say any of these things of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also seems to suggest that ascendancy and authority is something temporal, material, *literal*. The words themselves echo the edicts and decrees of the old imperial Church.

What kind of kingship is Christ's? Not like any kingdom on earth that we know of. He himself said to Pilate: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' The worst mistake we can make is to think that it has anything whatsoever to do with emperors or empires, papal states or authoritarian rule, or that it is to be established on this earth and in this life. That would be a travesty. The kingship of the Lord Jesus, above all, is one of love, not authority, power, rule or dominion. And love does not need to govern, but only to draw toward itself.

The Feast of Christ the King is particularly associated with Youth – it is also Youth Sunday – because it invites young people to enthrone Christ in their hearts.

So, it's all the more important, then, that the Church can offer an authentic meaning to the lives of young people. It's not an easy task. There's a huge amount of opposition; but it's not the task of the Church to 'adapt' to the modern world. Adapt to what? – It isn't a matter of adapting but of *understanding*; so it is crucial that we find a mutually intelligible language to share that understanding. The Church must above all be an instrument and vessel of love, because only the power of love can reach even for the most lost, angry or wounded young person. St John of the Cross said: "Where you do not find love, pour love in and you will soon draw love out." Love is the thief of all hearts. This is what we need to teach – and not just the young.