

*Christ the King*  
*The End of the Story*

The most important part of any story is not the beginning, not the middle, but the end. For it is at the end of the story that we see how everything fits together. At the end of the story we understand why everything happened the way it did. We understand why some people succeeded, and other people failed. For the first time, we know who was right, and who was wrong.

Today's feast of Jesus Christ the King is the end of the story. It is the end of the story of the church's liturgical year that began last Advent. It is the end of the story of our salvation. It is the end of the story that reveals the goal and purpose of our lives. This feast transports us into the future, and it assures us that God will have the last word, the only word that counts. God will be victorious; God will be triumphant.

When this will happen, we do not know. How this will happen, we do not know. What we do know, however, that the future is in God's hands. At the end of the story the whole of creation will be renewed and restored in Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ is the end of the story; Jesus Christ is the goal and purpose of our lives.

The prophet Daniel tells us the end of the story in today's first reading. During the course of the night, he has a vision in which he sees all of the kingdoms of the world come forth, one more powerful and violent than the other. One by one, however, these kingdoms are destroyed. Then Daniel sees the end of the story. Someone in the form of a human being, someone like a son of man, comes forth and stands before God's throne. The prophet Daniel did not know who this figure is. But we do. It is Jesus Christ, the king of the universe, whom we celebrate today.

Today's second reading from the last book of the Bible—the Book of Revelation—identifies Jesus as the firstborn from the dead because God raised him from the dead, and as the ruler of all rulers who has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood on the cross. Then, in today's gospel, Jesus stands before Pilate and proclaims he

has come to testify to the truth—the truth that is God—and everyone who acknowledges the truth that is God listens to the voice of Jesus.

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Although we know the end of the story we are still in the middle of the story, a story that seems to be controlled by the powers of hatred and violence, a story in which the powers of sin and death seem too powerful to overcome, a story in which we often find ourselves overwhelmed by the evil that surrounds us. If Jesus Christ is king, we say, let him come with all the power and force of God to destroy God's enemies once and for all. If Jesus Christ is king, we say, let him show his royal power so that we can rejoice in the destruction of his enemies, once and for all.

Yes, this is how we would bring the story to an end—with a mighty display of power, even if it means violence. But the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world, it is not a kingdom of power and violence. Jesus Christ is a different kind of king. This king conquers through suffering rather than through violence. This king overcomes his enemies through love rather than hatred. This king wins the victory through his cross and resurrection—and so must we.

We know the end of the story, and so we should be filled with hope and confidence. But if we are to participate in Christ's victory, we must live according to his kingdom rather than the kingdom of this world: a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice and peace.

This is the end of the story. This is why we hope. As we celebrate this Eucharist in which we proclaim the end of the story, we ask for the grace to enter into this kingdom so that we can live with Jesus Christ, our savior and king.