

Live the Mystery of the **Kingdom**

Make it Present in Your Heart,
in Other People's Hearts,
and in Society



REGNUM
CHRISTI

This goal of this essay is to dive deeper into the mystery of the Kingdom of Christ to help us better live our identity as Regnum Christi members. It is part of a project undertaken by the Regnum Christi Federation General Directorate's Area of Life and Mission to promote the deep knowledge and heartfelt assimilation of the charism based on the Statutes as a pathway of spiritual and apostolic renewal. Besides producing content such as this essay, we will also seek to offer in-depth conferences and other support tools for use at the territorial and local level.

In the first essay, published for the feast of Christ the King in 2019, the theme was “Living and Making Present the Mystery of Christ” from the perspective of Christ the Apostle “who goes out to people, reveals the love of his heart to them, gathers them together and forms them as apostles and Christian leaders, sends them out and accompanies them as they collaborate in the evangelization of people and of society.” (SRCF 8)

With this second essay we want to focus on what moved Christ to go out to meet and form apostles: establishing the “Kingdom of God.” As Regnum Christi members we want to collaborate with Christ so this Kingdom becomes present “in the hearts of all people and in society.” (SRCF 7)

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Presentation

The name of our spiritual family, Regnum Christi, means “the Kingdom of Christ.” “We seek to give glory to God and make the Kingdom of Christ present in the hearts of people and of society” (SRCF 7). Our motto “Christ our King, thy Kingdom Come!” expresses the longing to live, witness, and proclaim the Kingdom of Christ (see SRCF 13).

This Kingdom is God’s desire for man; the fulfillment of our true identity as beloved sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, created for happiness.

For our part, we live in a permanent tension between the desires of our heart and reality. We feel a deep thirst to be truly loved and known, to belong to a family and, on the other hand, we often encounter anonymity, rejection, and loneliness. We want to be ourselves and we find ourselves hiding behind masks for fear of being found worthless. We want to be free, and sometimes we are enslaved. We fear the possibility of being sick, of being weak, of being incapable. We all want a full, authentic life, and sometimes we experience a feeling of fragmentation, of meaninglessness, of uselessness.

Does God really have something to say to this world we live in, in this existential situation?

Not only does he have “something” to say to us, but he speaks his Word to us: Christ. In him, God himself becomes present, here and now. He comes to meet our thirst, the longing we feel for his presence.



In my daily life, do I notice the desires for life and freedom that beat in my heart? How are they expressed? How do I seek to satisfy them? What does my heart thirst for?



When Jesus proclaimed: “The Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15), his heart was overflowing with the Father’s desire that all people accept the salvation, life, and freedom that he has always destined us for.

During his earthly life, what moved Christ to go out to people, reveal the love of his heart to them, gather them together, form them as apostles, send them out and accompany them (see SRCF 8), was precisely the desire to “make present the Kingdom of God.”

To say “Thy Kingdom Come!” expresses the longing for salvation, love, life, and freedom that beats in the depth of every human heart and in the Heart of God.

This essay seeks to illuminate the mystery of the Kingdom that calls us together in Regnum Christi. The text aims to help us discover that the mystery of the Kingdom is capable of satisfying the deepest longings of our being and offers tips on how we can work together so others discover and welcome it as well.

The first part of the essay presents the mystery of the Kingdom from the perspective of Jesus and those who first listened to him; the second part offers reflections on how Christ can reign today in our hearts, in others' hearts, and in the heart of society.

This essay unpacks the Gospel foundations of our mission, which are shared by the whole Church and are therefore a necessary condition for any apostolic activity to be fruitful. Because of their importance, the more specific aspects of Regnum Christi's mission and the principles of apostolic action will be the subject of another essay.

The mystery of the Kingdom has the same transformative power today — the same relevance and beauty — as it had two thousand years ago. This mystery is as close to us today as it was on the Sunday of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; it is as deep within us as it was at the first Pentecost.

It is well worth discovering the Kingdom of Christ in the Gospel and in our lives.

I. The Mystery of the Kingdom in Jesus

The Kingdom of God as a promise to the chosen people

When the Jews in Jesus' time heard about the Kingdom of God, they had in mind all the promises the Lord had made to his people. According to the faith of Israel, the Lord God is King of the universe, and no earthly or heavenly power can compare to the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth¹. The whole of creation, in fact, belongs to the Lord. In the beginning of time, the visible creation had been his Kingdom, his garden, the paradise where everything—heaven and earth, water and solid ground, plants, animals, and man—was in harmony with Divine Love.

Because of sin, the world ceased to fully be “the Kingdom of God” and was subject to the power of evil and death. But the Lord made various covenants with the people of Israel. He went out to meet Abraham, invited him to walk in his presence, promised that he would give him a land and that his descendants, more numerous than the stars of the sky and the sands of the sea, would inhabit it in peace.

¹ Ps 93.1; 96.10; 97.1; 99.1; Is 43.15.



When the people of Israel were enslaved in a foreign land because of their infidelity to the covenant, the Lord showed himself faithful to the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, revealing himself as the living God who sees the oppression of his people, hears their complaints, knows their sufferings (see Exodus 3:7), and comes to free them with a mighty hand. His power is manifested in his ability to renew the covenant, to give them a land, and to make of them a Kingdom (Exodus 19:3). The Lord wished to reign in his people and through them to manifest his glory to all nations, so they too would recognize him as the only sovereign, and in him find happiness.

In my own personal history, have I experienced times when my faith has been tested? Reading scripture, is there a passage in the Old Testament that somehow reflects a trying situation similar to one I have experienced? What confirmed and strengthened the faith of the people of Israel? and mine?

The faith of the chosen people in the belief that God would fulfill his promises was tested many times, and just as many times it was confirmed by the interventions of the Lord of history to save his people.



The entire Old Testament vibrates with a poignant tension between burning desire and firm hope for the Kingdom. The Jews longed and hoped for their definitive liberation from slavery, their definitive return from exile, the restoration of the unity of God's people.

The Lord had promised that he himself would be the shepherd, he himself the king, he himself the spouse. He had promised that he would again dwell among his people; his glory would again fill the Temple. The Messiah—also called the Son of David and the Son of Man—

had to come to prepare the people for the definitive fulfillment of the promise. God had promised this and he was going to fulfill it.

With his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus proclaims and makes present the mystery of the Kingdom

For those who heard Jesus, the teaching of the original lordship of God that was about to be restored was not a theory or an intellectual attempt to explain reality: it was the history of their people, the lived experience of their ancestors. This desire and hope gave meaning to the present moment of their lives.

When Jesus went around the villages of Galilee proclaiming that “the time has come and the Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15), this announcement touched the depths of the hearts of a people who remembered God’s promises.

The surprising thing about Jesus’ message is — and was also at that time — the affirmation that the hope of the patriarchs and the prophets was being fulfilled in his very person. It was happening in a totally unexpected way.

With his simple yet authoritative words, Jesus offers the mystery of the Kingdom to the mind and heart anyone who wants to embrace it. In parables and symbols taken from ordinary life situations, he lets us glimpse his profound mystery.



In these parables, Jesus describes how the Kingdom is present in the midst of the world, how it works, and how one enters it. The Kingdom is like a seed that grows by itself (see Mark 4:26-29), since it is not a human work, but a gift of God's love acting within believers. It is also like the wheat that grows together with the weeds (see Matthew 13:24-30) because it is already the active presence of God's salvation in the midst of sin and evil. Jesus, preaching the Kingdom, is like the sower (see Matthew 13:3-8) whose harvest, although the seed is always good, also depends on how people welcome it.

The parables, with their unsuspected depth, shed light to help us understand the mystery of the Kingdom. But nothing speaks with as much clarity as the very life of Christ.

By his miracles he shows that Love is stronger than the powers of evil that seem to drown out the yearnings of the human heart. In the name of the Father, Jesus forgives sins, casts out demons, heals the blind, the deaf, the paralyzed, and the lepers, and raises the dead. His powerful acts and his gestures of compassion show people his message is not in vain. It is not just beautiful words, but a message confirmed by the power of God, a power that is love alone, and that is capable of reigning.

Jesus shows with his own life what the Kingdom is like: he lives poor, free, and trustful like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (see Matthew 6:25 ff.) and sends the disciples out to preach without money, in order to show that the

Reflecting on Jesus' parables about the Kingdom, how would you describe it in your own words? What characteristics does this Kingdom have? If you had to write a parable to explain the Kingdom to someone, what would it be about? What images would you use?



Looking at the life of Jesus (his words, his actions, his way of relating to others) what speaks to you the most about the Kingdom that he wants to give us? In contemplating Jesus in the Gospel, is there a passage that reveals the Kingdom and what it is like to you in an especially strong way?



Kingdom is established in poverty under God's Providence. He lets himself be touched by the sick, stays and eats with sinners, and even declares they will be the first to arrive at the Kingdom: "Amen I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31), for he came "to seek and save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). He calls sinners and simple people to follow him, for he knows the Father has hidden these things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to the childlike (See Matthew 11:25).

When the disciples and the people see all this, they begin to believe the Kingdom of God really is coming, or rather, that it is already in their midst, for in Jesus God himself fulfills all his ancient promises in a more mysterious and beautiful way than they had expected. Elements already revealed in the Old Testament are unveiled more powerfully: God is not only King but Father, and in his Kingdom we are all his children and must live as brothers and sisters.

In his mission Jesus encounters approval, but also stubborn resistance from some people, precisely because the Kingdom he proclaims and reveals conflicts with some expectations and beliefs. His presence, while connecting with the most authentic desires of the human person, also lays bare other desires that are not in conformity with his Kingdom.

With his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus no longer speaks in parables, but clearly

shows that he is sovereign and judge, and how he exercises his power. Jesus knows that the definitive victory of the Kingdom of God over the prince of this world will be won by the surrender of his life, by his filial obedience to the Father, showing with his life how the power of God works and what it means to be a child and image of God in the midst of a world that has lost grace.

For the disciples, Jesus' death on the cross meant the cruel frustration of their expectations and the end of their hope. All that remained for them was to hide away in fear behind locked doors or leave Jerusalem.

It would be the first day of the week when Jesus shows his friends the truth of all he had taught: The Father had fulfilled all his promises by not abandoning him to the nether world or letting him see corruption (see Psalm 16).

The resurrection of Jesus is for the first Christians the beginning of a new creation, the passage from feeling like guilty subjects to being beloved children forever. Christ's victory over sin and death meant the irrevocable and real establishment of the Kingdom of God. Jesus had fulfilled the desire they had inherited from their ancestors. He had not disappointed their hope.

The life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus were experienced by the first Christians as the definitive arrival of the Kingdom. For Peter, John, Mary Magdalene, and all the disciples, Jesus' resurrection was not

something that concerned the Lord alone. It affected everyone and changed everything. In him, who before his ascension said: “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20), heaven had truly come to earth. And with him, the earth had been taken into heaven. Whoever lives in communion with the risen Christ has died and risen with him². This Kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven—was a reality worth giving one’s bodily life for.

The whole New Testament resounds with this jubilant cry, full of wonder, gratitude, and deep joy: “See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are! ... Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed” (1 John 3:1-2).

Jesus Christ himself is the Kingdom of God

So, what is the Kingdom of God? The most concrete answer is “Jesus Christ.”

“The Kingdom is clearly visible in the very person of Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man” (LG 5). The entire New Testament shows the intimate relationship between the Kingdom and Jesus, a relationship so close the Kingdom of God can also

² See *Romans* 6:1-14; *Romans* 8; *Galatians* 2:19 ff.; *Colossians* 2:19 ff.; 3:1 ff.; among others.

be called “The Kingdom of Jesus” (see Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 1:11).

If Jesus Christ was just another historical character, this identification between the Kingdom of God and his person would not make any sense. The Kingdom of God would only have been his project, truncated by his crucifixion. But if Jesus Christ has crossed the threshold of death to enter into the life that knows no sunset, then the Kingdom of God is concrete, real, personal, and accessible. “We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him” (Romans 6:9). Therefore, it is certain Jesus is stronger than evil, death, and lies, and is able to respond to our desires for good, life, and truth.

Jesus himself is the Kingdom of God, because in him God reigns. His whole humanity is under the influence or lordship of divine love and life. In him we see that the reign of God does not oppress the human beings, does not dehumanize them, but on the contrary vivifies them, liberates them, heals them, and gives each of them their entire value as individuals: it makes them beloved sons and daughters. No one has ever been more human, more free, more himself than Jesus of Nazareth.

In Jesus, true God and true man (and therefore part of our visible world), full harmony between God and his creation has been restored. Through him everything human — laughter and tears, hunger and eating, work and rest, solitude and companionship, living and dying, body, psyche, soul, work life, politics, etc... — can be



Do you remember a time when you experienced God setting you free? From what does he free you, and how?



touched and enlivened by God. In everything that is human, the Kingdom of God can be present. Jesus has torn the veil between the profane and the sacred, restoring the original harmony between heaven and earth.

Jesus himself is the Kingdom of God, because with his earthly life he shows what happens when we let God reign in our world, even while it is still, so to speak, “non-Kingdom”: “the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the Good News proclaimed to them” (Luke 7:22).

To emphasize that Jesus himself is the Kingdom of God means celebrating that we live for someone, not for something. The Kingdom is a divine person with a human heart, who knows me and loves me, who “loved me and gave himself up for me” (Galatians 2:20), who I can be close to, converse with, work with.

Jesus himself is the Kingdom and therefore the Church, which is his body, is “the seed and the beginning of the Kingdom on earth” (LG 5, SRCF 16).

The Kingdom of God, for those of us who believe in Jesus, is concrete, understandable, and relevant, while remaining a mystery that exceeds our capacity to understand, and even though it acts above and beyond our own actions. This Kingdom can never be possessed and manipulated like a thing, but we can belong to it and be vivified by it, since it is within us and it transforms us.

Already but not yet

The Kingdom has truly arrived, but not yet in full. Through the resurrection and the sending of the Spirit, it has begun, but it has not been realized in its totality. The Kingdom has already entered our human history and is working in it. The Kingdom is here, in our midst, but it will be consummated in the hereafter³.

The Kingdom acts on earth. In earthly realities, which seem so opaque, the divine life can show itself. The divine is shown in the human and the human is able to receive the divine.

The glory and power of the Kingdom are revealed in the humility of the poor in spirit and in the humiliation of the cross. That is why the little ones are great and the last will be first.

These are not plays on words with which we console ourselves in the face of the fact that the world and people seem to be as bad as in Jesus' time. These paradoxes express the mysterious character of the reality Jesus has inaugurated. They speak to us



Our ordinary life sometimes seems too human to be “of God.” But Christ became incarnate to reign in our day-to-day. In your daily life, where do you experience the Kingdom of God and where are you called to incarnate it more deeply?



³ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 27: “Evangelization will also always contain – as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all people, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy. And not an immanent salvation, meeting material or even spiritual needs, restricted to the framework of temporal existence and completely identified with temporal desires, hopes, affairs and struggles, but a salvation which exceeds all these limits in order to reach fulfillment in a communion with the one and only divine Absolute: a transcendent and eschatological salvation, which indeed has its beginning in this life but which is fulfilled in eternity.”

of these “last times”⁴ between Pentecost and the glorious return of the Lord, in which the Kingdom of God is present, active, and in perpetual growth in the midst of this world. The parables and the deeds of Jesus in his earthly life were intended to illuminate precisely this tension between the promise already fulfilled and the hope of a definitive consummation.

“Communion with God in time is a foretaste of eternity and makes the Kingdom of Heaven present in the here and now. Conscious of that and also of the brevity of our lives, we make the most of our time as a gift we have received that enables us to lovingly follow the Father’s saving plan, and thus live our vocation to the full” (SRCF 21).

⁴ See Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20.

II. The mystery of the Kingdom in me and through me

As Regnum Christi members, we know we are sent to make the Kingdom of God present in our own hearts, in others' hearts, and in society:

“Bearing witness to, proclaiming and expanding the Kingdom of Christ constitutes the ideal that inspires and directs us. Our motto—‘Christ our King, thy Kingdom come!’—expresses this longing. Therefore:

1. we seek to clothe ourselves with Christ in our hearts and in our works, so he reigns in our lives through progressive configuration with him;
2. we let ourselves be permeated by Christ's love for humanity, striving to have him reign in the hearts of all people and society” (SRCF 13).

When the Lord has begun to reign in one's heart, it is possible to bring the gift of the Kingdom to others. With them, with those who have also opened their hearts to the power of Love, we work

to make society a place more worthy of God's children.

In the second part of this essay, the text opens many windows for reflection, without developing the contents as amply as they deserve. It sketches the outlines of the richness of the Kingdom and its meaning for our lives, encouraging a desire to dive into, deepen, expand, and develop what is lightly mentioned here.

The Kingdom in my heart

We can ask ourselves: What does it mean to let Christ establish his Kingdom in my heart? How is it made real in me and how can I welcome this gift?

Letting yourself be found and redeemed

The first thing is to realize that our condition as weak, poor people, full of ambiguities, far from being an obstacle, is actually a reason for Christ to begin to reign in us. Every time we recognize ourselves as sinners or encounter our many limitations, we have a reason to let ourselves be looked at and called by the one who has come to seek out sinners and to joyfully celebrate the miracle of our regeneration. The Lord never tires of making all things new. And the more deeply we are convinced that we are redeemed sinners, the more we can say of ourselves: "I was dead and have come to life again; I was lost and have been found" (see Luke 15:32),

the more we will be able to bear witness to what the Kingdom consists of. So, “we live our condition as creatures, and as sons and daughters in need of mercy and grace, with simplicity and an unshakable confidence in his love in every moment” (SRCF 25).

Where love reigns, there God reigns

If, from now on, we want to listen in our hearts to the voice of the One who says “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34), the way is charity. “Charity entails universal and thoughtful self-giving to one’s neighbor, creative and selfless service, treating people with kindness and simplicity, being merciful with people’s weaknesses, speaking well of others, forgiveness and reconciliation” (SRCF 23 §2; see also SRCF 17). The more consciously and deliberately we choose God’s Love as our guide in every moment, the more our heart will be under the liberating dominion of the One to whom “all power in heaven and on earth has been given” (Matthew 28:18).

Welcoming and guarding the Kingdom in my heart

The Kingdom is not conquered by one’s own strength, but welcomed as a gift. Experiencing this gift, we want to take care of it, guard it, and protect it. Therefore, allowing Jesus to reign in our hearts also implies saying “No” to all the forces that oppose love, and in this sense “accepting that following Christ includes spiritual combat, the struggle marked by

perseverance and trust in the Lord in the face of the reality of evil and sin in one's own life and society, moved by the power of love to the extreme" (SRCF 10 §1). The meaning of a healthy asceticism is not to conquer, but to protect the gift of the Kingdom. First comes discovery and acceptance, then protection.

"My whole person": a call to "be the Kingdom" ⁵

Every human life is also called to be the Kingdom of God. The Son of the Father chooses to live his life in each of us: to think in me, love in me, pray in me, overcome evil and death in me and through me.

All our human faculties (body, psyche, spirit, will, intelligence, free will, feelings, memory, senses, imagination) exist to enter into communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and among ourselves as God's family. We have been created to become conformed to the Son of God⁶.

This original divine plan, which our sin had sabotaged, has been restored and overcome by Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The risen Jesus is the prototype of the new creation, for in him a human being has entered definitively into divine life, without ceasing to be human.

⁵ "We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization" Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 8.

⁶ *Romans* 8:29; *1 Corinthians* 15:49; *2 Corinthians* 3:18; *Philippians* 3:21; *Ephesians* 4:13; *1 John* 3:2, among others.

“So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Through faith and baptism we have been “integrated into the life of the risen Christ” (see SRCF 22) and we can say with St. Paul, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Through the action of the Holy Spirit, which the Lord has poured into our hearts, we can have in us the feelings, the thoughts, the attitudes, the emotions of Jesus. This process of “progressive configuration with Christ” (SRCF 13, see 30) is the meaning of the Christian life and will culminate with our definitive entrance into divine life. But we are not talking about something that awaits us behind the curtain of death: it has already begun, because his life as the Risen One is already in us. So, from now on “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a savior: the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

Our Encounter with Christ⁷

For this doctrine to pass from theory to reality, for it to be fruitful in our lives and have an effect, it is indispensable to truly enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ: “to encounter him in the Gospel, the Eucharist, the cross, and our neighbor” (SRCF 12). This implies learning to be “contemplative, because we discover Christ’s presence and love in our own

⁷ To deepen our understanding of this aspect, it may help to read *Evangelii Gaudium* 264-267 “the personal encounter with the love of Jesus that saves us.”

hearts, in our neighbor, and in the world” (see SRCF 20 §1).

In the Gospel we can contemplate and touch the living Jesus, for he is the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Everything he lived on earth, showing himself to be a friend of man and a conqueror of evil, he took with him to the Father and so does not belong to the past. When, for example, we see Jesus touching a leper or washing Peter’s feet, or when we listen to his teachings, we are seeing and hearing the same Risen One who wants to do the same for us and through us⁸.

Being contemplative does not mean withdrawing from the world; it means rather allowing the Lord to live in us and at our side “in the midst of temporal realities, aspiring to make the Kingdom of God present in this world” (RL 4). This is done by using our faculties as his: seeing with him, enjoying with him, doing things with him, and treating people with his Heart⁹. In the Gospel we see how Jesus saw and treated all creation as a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of God’s infinite beauty and generosity, and of his love for humankind. This is why Jesus

8 In the essay “Living and Making Present the Mystery of Christ” the doctrine about the real presence of Jesus in our lives and our possibility of coming into contact with his Life is further unpacked.

9 “I beg you to think... that Jesus Christ, Our Lord, is your true Head, and that you are one of his members... He is to you what the head is to his members; all that is his is yours, his spirit, his heart, his body, his soul, and all his faculties, and you are to use them as your own, to serve, to praise, to love, and to glorify God. You are his as the members are his. Thus he ardently desires to use all that is in you for the service and glory of his Father, as of things that are his” (Saint John Eudes, *Le Coeur admirable de la Très Sacrée Mère de Dieu*, 1, 5: *Oeuvres complètes*, v.6). (quoted in CCC 1698).

“lived constantly aware of having received everything from the Father’s hands” (SRCF 25). If we open ourselves to him with sincerity and determination, he takes it upon himself to teach us to live like this and we will experience that “the Kingdom of God is... righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

If we let the Kingdom into our lives, we will not be transported to an idyllic world, but will be driven to walk the paths of Jesus that lead to Easter. The disciple will not fare better than the master (see Matthew 10:16-42). But, since Christ lives and reigns, we can be sure that this is how the personal experience of his love will germinate in our hearts and this passion will move us to adopt the lifestyle described in No. 10 of the *Federation’s Statutes*:

“The personal experience of Christ’s love produces an interior urging in our hearts that impels us to passionate self-giving in order to make his Kingdom present: ‘*caritas Christi urget nos*’ (2 Corinthians 5:14). This passion moves us to take on a way of living that is characterized by:

1. accepting that following Christ includes spiritual combat, the struggle marked by perseverance and trust in the Lord in the face of the reality of evil and sin in one’s own life and in society, moved by the power of love to the extreme;
2. undertaking with a magnanimous, enthusiastic, creative heart the actions that make the Kingdom present in greater depth

and extent;

3. going out to address the most pressing needs of the world and the Church;

4. facing challenges with courage and boldness in our personal lives and in the apostolate;

5. making the most of the opportunities that arise in life to proclaim the love of Christ with Christian audacity;

6. fulfilling the responsibilities we assumed, and striving to give the best of ourselves both in our formation and in our work.”

Helping others discover the gift of the Kingdom

In his earthly life Jesus, the “Apostle of the Father” (see SRCF 9), goes out to people, reveals the love of his heart to them, gathers them together, forms them as apostles and sends them out (see SRCF 8), “driven by the desire to enkindle the fire of the Father’s love in all hearts” (SRCF 20) and to have them enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus Christ today wants to continue his work through us.

Lending Christ our humanity

How do you help others so that Christ reigns in their hearts? We must recognize this is really something we cannot “do.” The Kingdom is extended when someone, under the impulse of grace, opens the door of his heart to the Savior. It is a personal response, which cannot be replaced.

What we can do is lend Christ our humanity, so that, through us, he reveals the Kingdom of God and so

acts by entering gently into the hearts of the people we interact with. In other words, the Kingdom is extended by attraction¹⁰.

Gratuitousness

One characteristic of the way we see Jesus relate to people is gratuitousness. This is a typically divine characteristic. God's love is always given freely: he creates the world, without having to do so; he redeems man, without having to do so; he invites man to share in his communion, without having to do so. God never acts out of necessity or duty: he is supreme freedom. In Jesus this is shown at every step: in allowing himself to be baptized without being a sinner, at the wedding feast of Cana by giving the best wine without reserve, by touching the leper when he could have healed him from a distance, by instituting the Eucharist, by "giving the Spirit without reserve" (John 3:34). Gratuitousness is the sign of the action of the Holy Spirit. His promptings inspire gratuitous gestures that touch hearts, even without us realizing it: a sincere question, a smile, a gift, a silence, a gesture of forgiveness, etc.

Reaching out to others, person-to-person

Another aspect of Jesus' way of acting is "person-to-person" (SRCF 34). Jesus "goes out to engage others in the concrete realities of their lives" (RL 9:3). Approaching everyone with selfless love, where



Can you recall undeserved gestures of love that touched your heart? What were the circumstances? Who did they come from? How did they affect you?



Have I ever experienced Jesus reaching out to someone through me, opening the door for him to reign in them?



¹⁰ "The Church does not grow by proselytism but by attraction" Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 14.

they are at this moment, and welcoming them with kindness is one of the most powerful acts we can do for the Kingdom. It requires the same freedom and generosity as Jesus who knew how to take the first step, even if he was tired from the journey (see John 4:6) or sensed he would be rejected (see Matthew 21:37).

Accompaniment

The experience of the disciples of Emmaus gives us another clue about how to touch the hearts of others so they open up to the Kingdom: Jesus “drew near and walked with them” (Luke 24:15). He wants to accompany many today through us by means of “close, stable, personal attention marked by selfless service” (SRCF 35). We accompany others in order to sustain them on their own Easter journey and to “inspire, guide, and form” (SRCF 33) those who in turn are called to be witnesses of the Resurrection.

Gathering together¹¹

We see that Jesus, from the beginning of his public life, brings people together. He gathers the scattered children of Israel¹² as a sign the Kingdom of God has arrived. The Church is “the seed and the beginning of the Kingdom on this earth” (see

11 To go deeper into this aspect, it may help to read *Evangelii Gaudium* 87-92 “Yes to the new relationships brought by Christ.”

12 *Isaiah 56:8; Ezekiel 37:21 ff.; John 11:52.*

LG 5, SRCF 16) because she is the family of God gathered around the Son¹³.

Offering the gift of the Kingdom to those who have not yet discovered it involves inviting them into a community of disciples of Jesus Christ. Neither doctrine nor person-to-person action is enough: A concrete community is needed. Simple community experiences, not only liturgical ones, animated by the Gospel, have great evangelizing power. A meal shared among friends, an enjoyable activity, a prayer meeting, a community initiative for the good of the suffering — these are moments where the beauty of Christian fraternity is experienced and where the Kingdom is also made present.

Through *Regnum Christi*, in team life, as well as in community, we have a privileged place where the Lord invites each one to reach out to meet others and let oneself be met, to form others and let oneself be formed, to accompany others and let oneself be accompanied, to send others out and let oneself be sent out. Thus, a religious community or a team of lay members can really be “a group of members united in Christian fraternity to help each other on their journey of sanctification, in their formation and in their apostolic work, following the example of the first Christian communities” (RL 14 §2).

¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 541-542.

Are we really making the Kingdom present?

Every apostolic activity of a Regnum Christi member must be a catalyst for the participants to discover the gift of the Kingdom and grow in their capacity to be apostles themselves. This is a charismatic element, and therefore it is worth asking whether it is in fact happening. It is not enough to transmit content, even if it is catechetical. It is not enough to teach skills, even if they are for evangelization. It is not enough to offer material help, even if it is in the name of the Church. And much less can we be satisfied with being professional service providers or being successful in entertaining people. All of this only works insofar as it makes present the Kingdom shown by Jesus in the Gospel¹⁴.

“Aware that the Kingdom of Christ is a gift and that we cannot build it by human strength alone, we seek to remain always in communion with Christ and with his Church, like the branch on the vine (see John 15:5). As followers and collaborators of Christ the Apostle, we know that prayer, participation in his cross, generosity in the service of others, trust in the action of his grace, and the witness of an authentically Christian life must precede and accompany all our apostolic action” (SRCF 9).

¹⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 75: “Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit the most convincing dialectic has no power over the heart of man. Without Him the most highly developed schemas resting on a sociological or psychological basis are quickly seen to be quite valueless.”

Making the Kingdom present in society

In Regnum Christi we are keenly aware that the Lord wants “to make his Kingdom present among us so as to renew society” (SRCF 32). Whenever the Statutes of the Federation speak of our identity and mission, they mention that the Kingdom of Christ must not only reach people’s hearts, but also be manifest in society (see SRCF 7, 8, 10:1, 13, 14), because it must “transform temporal realities with the message of the Gospel” (SRCF 5; see RL 1 and 9).

Possible misunderstandings

The Church’s intention to make the Kingdom of God present in society is open to many misunderstandings. It is obviously not a political ideal, as if it were a matter of achieving a theocracy, with no distinction between the temporal and the spiritual order. Nor does it mean dreaming of a utopian world in which the prophetic visions of universal peace and harmony are realized in time. This new land is certainly the object of our hope, but it will not be the fruit of our apostolic commitment.

“The Kingdom will be fulfilled, then, not by a historic triumph of the Church (see Revelation 13:8) through a progressive ascendancy, but only by God’s victory over the final unleashing of evil (see Revelation 20:7-10), which will cause his Bride to come down from heaven (see Revelation 21:2-4)” (Catechism 677).



What do I understand by “making the Kingdom present in society?”



What do the growth of the Kingdom of God and the progress of man have to do with each other? They are two different things, but we cannot separate them. Man's vocation to eternal life does not suppress but rather reinforces his duty to put into practice the energies and means received from the Creator to serve justice and peace in this world¹⁵. And it is precisely the conviction that God has overcome evil in Jesus Christ that gives the Lord's followers the strength and desire to "make his Kingdom present in society" and to "transform temporal realities according to the Gospel."

A home worthy of the children of God

Lay members of Regnum Christi aspire "to make the Kingdom of God present in this world so it becomes a worthy home for the children of God in which all things contribute to giving him glory" (RL 4). This is a beautiful formulation of the Lord's "social program," which we make our own.

Jesus made the Kingdom of God present in the society of his time. He did not directly transform religious, social, and political structures, nor was that his intent. He did not convince everyone of their mistakes, nor did he want to. But his way of being and acting was a light that shone in the darkness and touched hearts in such a way that Christians,

¹⁵ CCC 2820.

like leaven in the dough, began to slowly transform society¹⁶.

When necessary and appropriate, he denounced the abuses of religious and civil authorities. But above all, he lived to show that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of this world, however much it may seem like the kingdom of darkness, and to unpack through deeds, gestures, and words how God's power is seen and felt. He did this by living and manifesting the Love of the Father in every situation: he healed the sick, welcomed the excluded, made his disciples into a community of brothers and sisters open to all, and formed them to continue his mission. This is how we want to collaborate to make the world a home worthier of the children of God.

Committing to a better world

There is ample reflection from the magisterium of the Church on the social commitment of Christians and the Church as an inalienable part of our vocation and mission in the midst of the world¹⁷. We would not be



In the environment in which I live — my family, professional, and social life, what signs of the presence and action of God do I discover? Where could I help make the world a more worthy home for God's children?



¹⁶ Paul IV, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 18: For the Church, evangelization means bringing the Good News into all areas of humanity and, through its influence, transforming humanity from within, renewing it. "Behold, I make all things new. But the truth is that there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new men with the newness of baptism and life according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore this inner change and, if it had to be summed up in one word, it would be best to say that the Church evangelizes when, by the sole divine power of the Message she proclaims, she seeks to convert at the same time the personal and collective consciences of people, the activity in which they are engaged, their concrete life and environment.

¹⁷ See Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, chapter IV "The Social Dimension of Evangelization"

disciples of the true Jesus if we did not seek to work personally and communally, according to our own personal talents, circumstances, and vocation, for the assistance of the most disadvantaged, for a just society, for the presence of the Gospel in cultural settings, for civil legislation that respects the dignity of each human being, etc. In all this we will make “the Kingdom present” if our effort is Gospel-based in its intention and in its methods.

Bearing witnessing that everything human can reveal the Kingdom

There is a primordial path, prior to any concrete initiative, to make the Kingdom present in society: to live in the midst of the world as in a place capable of revealing the Kingdom. In spite of sin and vast amounts of suffering, Regnum Christi members are aware that no human circumstance remains excluded from the Kingdom, since God’s creation is essentially good. Any human event, lived with the gratitude of a child of God, is an occasion to experience and give others a glimpse of “life in abundance”: a sporting event, a concert, a family or friends’ celebration. Being able to enjoy the natural beauty of creation and the good works of man are very simple yet powerful and profoundly evangelical ways of bearing witness that the Lord has made all things new. It is very helpful to contemplate Jesus in the midst of the most varied human circumstances: a wedding, a banquet, fishing...

Light that shines in the darkness

Jesus never avoided the suffering of other people. On the contrary, he wanted to be Light that shines in the darkness and has shown us that the Father's powerful Love is manifested precisely where it seems not to reign. In sickness, in mourning, and especially where sin abounds, this is where he most wants to make the Kingdom of God present. The light of the Kingdom has shone in such dense darkness as in Auschwitz and can manifest itself in the most anti-Kingdom circumstances. The only place capable of closing itself off to the Kingdom is the heart of man; the only door the Spirit will never force is the freedom of man.

The Lord invites us personally—and communally—to accompany him when he approaches concrete situations to make his Kingdom present there and thus contribute to making the world a more worthy home for the children of God: a family conflict, a sick or abandoned neighbor, a social wound that we can help to heal...

Forming Apostles

The entire Church is called to make the Kingdom of God present by following the footsteps of Christ. In *Regnum Christi* we know we are sent to participate in this mission common to the entire Church by “making present the mystery of Christ who goes out to meet people, reveals to them the love of his heart, gathers them together and forms them as apostles, Christian leaders, sends them and accompanies them so that



In my locality, section, or apostolate, what are we currently doing to form apostles?



they collaborate in the evangelization of people, and of society” (SRCF 8).

Jesus gives himself to everyone and also dedicates a significant part of his time to forming some in a special way, bringing them into his mystery and making them participants in his mission. In our apostolic activity as Regnum Christi members this facet of the mystery of Jesus forming apostles cannot be missing.

Any apostolic action that intends to be “profound, and dynamic requires people prepared to form, guide, and inspire others” and this is why Regnum Christi promotes the formation of formators (see SRCF 36). This principle becomes even more important as we seek to have the Kingdom transform both hearts and society.

The conviction that the Lord sent his disciples “to all nations” and wants to reach out to all people is what motivates our commitment to awaken Christian leadership and evangelize existing leadership (see SRCF 33), launch outreach apostolates (see SRCF 37), adapt ourselves to times and places (see SRCF 39), and seek to do apostolate in an organized, effective way (see SRCF 39), as well as through the concept of networks (see SRCF 49).

These methodological principles respond precisely to the passion to make Christ’s Kingdom present with the same dedication and intelligence as he did and as his first disciples did.

Conclusion

All Regnum Christi members share a prayer of offering:

Lord Jesus,
 I give you my hands to do your work.
 I give you my feet to follow your path.
 I give you my eyes to see as you see.
 I give you my tongue to speak your words.
 I give you my mind so you can think in me.
 I give you my spirit so you can pray in me.
 Above all I give you my heart so in me you can
 love your Father and all people.
 I give you my whole self so you can grow in
 me, till it is you, Christ, who live, and work, and
 pray in me.

It is a prayer with a single petition: that each one of us have the gaze, the actions, the thoughts, the desires, and the Heart of the Lord. This is the life of the apostle of the Kingdom: our christified reality, we ourselves as a symbol in the world, in our environment, in our whole life, in all its aspects: We make the Kingdom present.

To ask the Lord every morning to transform us is to say to him, all together: Thy Kingdom come! — the Kingdom that is Christ himself, and that is each one of us when we live in him, with him, and for him, continuing his work of saving people.

This invisible Kingdom becomes visible every day:

I give him my feet to follow a path, and that path is Jesus himself (see John 14:6). Prayer accustoms us to see the invisible—that is, the darkness—as a possibility of the Kingdom, the hand of God working in the world around us, our circumstances under his Providence.

The Kingdom is the Word made flesh, and that Word we want to pronounce with our words, but even more so with our lives.

The Kingdom can go into the depths of each person: their mind and spirit, their interior life, a space to be inhabited by Christ, the Kingdom incarnate.

The heart is the place of presence, the summit of the transfigured person. In the heart of each person, in our own heart, is where we find the door to the Kingdom. Christ our King is thus the center of our desires, the object of our love, the truth that identifies us. As the one sent by the Father, he shares with us his mission and his greatest love: the Father. The Kingdom comes from the Father only through the Holy Spirit in Christ.

Our offering ends with a sending forth. The love we have experienced, the life of Christ in us, is called to become life given to all people.

Additional resources

The following exercises and workshops are offered as an aid to approach the mystery of the Kingdom experientially and to discover it in our own lives.



I. Tips for personal reflection and prayer about the Kingdom

Here are some exercises that can help you meditate on the mystery of the Kingdom in your personal prayer time.

1

Discovering the mystery of the Kingdom present in my own life

When Regnum Christi members say: “Thy Kingdom Come!” we say it with a special ardor. Our hearts pound at the thought that Christ can reign in every heart, in every place, in the entire world. The Kingdom is already present in many places.

- ☑ In your own life, is there any place, any person, or any concrete situation in which you discover the Kingdom more clearly present?
- ☑ What are the signs or manifestations that help you recognize it? Are there some you resonate more with? What are the signs of the Kingdom in your own life?

2

The longing for the Kingdom

There are places or situations where we would like the Kingdom to be more present. These places and situations awaken in us a longing, a deep desire for Christ to reign.

- ☑ Are there any places, people, or situations in your life that cause you pain or sadness?

Why? Is there a space in your life or in the lives of others where you feel God is not present?

- ☑ Make a list of these places, situations, or people you want to bring to God. Read them one by one and ask the Lord: “May Thy Kingdom come — here!”
- ☑ Despite seeming absent, can you find the Kingdom in the midst of these circumstances? How is God present in them? How could he be more present?

3

The Kingdom
in the
parables

When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom, he wants each one of us to feel challenged in a personal, unique way. The parables acquire a particular meaning and importance for each person who hears them. In their simplicity, they are capable of bringing the logic of the Kingdom into ordinary life.

In chapter 13 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Jesus describes the Kingdom with seven different parables (the sower, the weeds among the wheat, the mustard seed, the yeast, the hidden treasure, the pearl, the net). Each parable reveals the Kingdom in a different way.

- ☑ After invoking the Holy Spirit, read chapter 13 of the Gospel of Matthew slowly.
- ☑ Choose one of the parables, the one that most “speaks” to your life at this time. Is
- ☑ there a symbol or image that catches your eye in the parable you chose?
- ☑ How does this parable touch your life here

and now? How does it invite you to enter the Kingdom and offer it to others?

4

The Messiah
I await

“He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.’ Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, ‘Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:16-21).

Many Israelites hoped the Messiah would be a powerful king who would free the people from oppression, others hoped that he would solve all their material problems. Some expected the salvation God had in mind.

- ✓ Am I waiting for a Messiah?
- ✓ What kind of Messiah am I expecting?
- ✓ Which Messiah have I already met in my personal experience?
- ✓ Read the Beatitudes slowly and pay attention to the resonances in your heart.

5

Encounters
with the
Kingdom

“When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, ‘He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.’ But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house’” (Luke 19:5-9).

- ☑ Which saving encounter (which is to say the coming of the Kingdom into a person) in the Gospel do I identify with the most? And why? (for example, the sinful woman, the call of Peter, the Samaritan woman, the blind man Bartimaeus, the expelling of demons, etc.)
- ☑ How has the coming of the Kingdom affected my life? What has Christ saved me from, and what has changed my life since I encountered God’s personal love?



II. Discovering the Kingdom in community

When we are in community or in a team in the name of Christ, he is in our midst. The exercise of listening to what God is saying to the heart of another person is an occasion for the Holy Spirit to speak to me and reveal a little more of the mystery of the Kingdom to me.

Below, we offer two activities that can be done as a team.

1

Thy Kingdom come! to our reality.

For this activity it helps to have Post-it Notes and pens on hand for the participants.

- ✔ To begin, we pray the offering prayer together.
- ✔ We take a moment of silence for each participant to think of circumstances or places where they wish the Kingdom of God would come. You can play music or keep an atmosphere of silence.
- ✔ Each participant writes these situations, circumstances, or places on the Post-it Notes. One per Post-it Note.
- ✔ They stick them on a nearby wall.
- ✔ Keeping the atmosphere of silence, each participant reads what the others have put on the wall.

We have expressed our desires for the Kingdom. They reflect the longing we all have for God to show

himself. We can now have a moment to share:

- ✔ What does all we have read on our notes tell us about the current situation?
- ✔ What does it say to me? What desire do I have in my heart now?
- ✔ What does it say to us as a team? Do we want to choose a situation where we can act together to make the Kingdom present?

We conclude with a spontaneous prayer.

2

The Kingdom
that comes
through
others

This activity presupposes that the participants know each other well, are fairly friendly with each other and have shared relevant experiences.

- ✔ Each participant is assigned the name of another team member.
- ✔ Leaving time for reflection, each member thinks about how the Kingdom has come through that person in their own life, in their actions, in their history.
- ✔ Each member shares with the other, one-on-one, how the Kingdom has come to meet them through the other.
- ✔ There is a round where everyone shares what resonated with them.

