



LIVING THE GOSPEL



The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King November 24th 2024

Theme: "My kingship is not of this world"

Gathering Prayer

All: Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 18:33-37

³³ Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" ³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." ³⁷ Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice."

Gospel Focus

Jesus' cryptic dialogue with Pilate does not make much clear. One thing that is clear though-that has been clear throughout Jesus' teachings-is that his idea of kingship is very different from ours. His idea of power is different from ours. It does not look like what we expect.. He carries on this very dialogue from a position of vulnerability, where he is held captive and his life threatened by these with worldly power. We who are baptized into Jesus' missions as priest, prophet and king are called to challenge the notion of kingship that clings to power and sees some humans as more dignified and deserving than others. We have the ongoing challenge of wrapping our minds around a leadership that really does operate from a place of humility.

Gospel Reflection

There's something about royalty that fascinates us. Peasants in biblical times were so different. When one's life is a constant struggle, to believe in a powerful king who could, with a wave of his hand, make everything go well for the little ones fuels hope and give reason to keep plodding on.

It is not surprising then, that Christians would think of Jesus in royal terms. Today's feast has a

double edge to it, as it is brought out in the readings. Jesus is “king” but in a most anti-imperial way. In the gospel we see Jesus on trial before Pilate, who is the extension of the imperial arm in Palestine.

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, in John Jesus does not remain silent before the Roman governor. Rather, Jesus seems to be the one in power, as though he were conducting the trial of Pilate. Throughout their exchanges, Jesus does not directly answer Pilate’s questions. Ironically, the latter ultimately condemns himself by his own responses to Jesus. Pilate takes on a mocking tone as he jibes at Jesus about being a king: what kind of king is handed over by his own people and does not have an army to defend himself? Pilate also ridicules any nationalistic hopes of the Jewish people for self-rule. This mockery continues in a subsequent scene as Pilate’s soldiers drape a purple cloak on his head, and imitate the greeting given the emperor, “Ave Ceasar!”

When Pilate queries, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus shifts the discussion away from himself as king and speaks instead about his “kingdom.” BY using imperial language to speak of God’s realm where love and fullness of life reign supreme, Jesus subverts kingly expressions of power that exploit and abuse others. By his actions and words, he has undermined monarchical systems of authority and obedience. He calls his followers “friends” and invites them into a community of beloved disciples, in which the leaders are the first to wash the feet of those who are least regarded.

Later in his interrogation of Jesus, Pilate boasts of his power to release Jesus or to crucify him, but Jesus reminds the Roman ruler that he would have no power over him unless it was given to him from above (19:10-11). Moreover, Jesus has already declared to his disciples that no one has power over his life; he himself lay it down freely (10:18). Pilate has no desire to hear about this kind of “kingdom,” and does not understand the anti-kingdom message of Jesus. Pilate is fixated on forcing Jesus to admit his claims to being a “king” so that he has ground on which to eliminate this supposed rival with pretensions to his own throne. Jesus will not give him that satisfaction and simply points out that it is Pilate who is using that kind of language, not Jesus. Jesus speaks of his mission not in terms of a conquering king but as one who testifies to the truth. All it takes to belong to this “kingdom” where truth reigns is to listen to his voice.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Daniel 7:13-14

¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

R: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

The Lord is king, in splendour robed;
robed is the Lord and girt about with strength. **(R)**

And he has made the world firm, not to be moved.
Your throne stands firm from of old; from everlasting you are, O Lord. **(R)**

Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed; holiness befits your house,
O Lord, for length of days. **(R)**

Second Reading — Revelation 1:5-8

⁵ ... from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

⁸ "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

160. To be human, "man's response to God by faith must be free, and therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. The act of faith is of its very nature a free act." "God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth. Consequently they are bound to him in conscience, but not coerced. This fact received its fullest manifestation in Christ Jesus." Indeed, Christ invited people to faith and conversion, but never coerced them. "For he bore witness to the truth but refused to use force to impose it on those who spoke against it. His kingdom grows by the love with which Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws men to himself." (cf. *Jn* 18:37; 12:32.)

217. God is also truthful when he reveals himself - the teaching that comes from God is "true instruction" (*Mal* 2:6) When he sends his Son into the world it will be "to bear witness to the truth" (*Jn* 18:37) "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true." (*I Jn* 5:20; cf. *Jn* 17:3)

549. By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death. (Cf. *Jn* 6:5-15; *Lk* 19:8; *Mt* 11:5) Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, (Cf. *Lk* 12 13-14; *Jn* 18:36.) but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage. (Cf. *Jn* 8:34-36.)

559. How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David". (*Lk* 1:32; cf. *Mt* 21:1-11; *Jn* 6:15.) Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (Hosanna means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass". (*Ps* 24:7-10; *Zech* 9:9.) Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth. (Cf. *Jn* 18:37.) And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds. (Cf. *Mt* 21:15-16; cf. *Ps* 8:3; *Lk* 19:38; 2:14.) Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord", (Cf. *Ps* 118:26.) is taken up by the Church in the "Sanctus" of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover.

600. To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore he establishes his eternal plan of "predestination", he includes in it each person's free response to his grace: "In this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." (*Acts* 4:27-28; cf. *Ps* 2:1-2) For the sake of accomplishing his plan of salvation,

God permitted the acts that flowed from their blindness.(Cf. Mt 26:54; Jn 18:36; 19:11; Acts 3:17-18)

2471. Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that he "has come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." (Jn 18:37.) The Christian is not to "be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord." (2 Tim 1:8) In situations that require witness to the faith, the Christian must profess it without equivocation, after the example of St. Paul before his judges. We must keep "a clear conscience toward God and toward men." (Acts 24:16)

Sharing and Discussion

- 1.How would you answer this question if asked, "What did Jesus do on earth and for what purpose?"
- 2.Reflect on John 18:36, why did Jesus make that statement? Would he make a similar statement, today?
3. "For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" Jesus knew his mission in life, what about you? What is yours?

Closing Prayer

All: God of glory, in you we live and move and have our being. Hear our prayers that as we honor the kingship of Christ, we might contribute to the building up of your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.