

Christ the King of the Universe B/2012

The readings of this feast of Christ the King focus on the kingship of Jesus. They show us what type of King is Jesus and how his kingship affects us. They also invite us to submit ourselves to his kingdom as we receive him in our life, in our family and in our world.

The first reading describes the vision that the prophet Daniel had in the middle of the night. In this vision, he saw a mystical and spiritual figure called the Son of Man coming out of the clouds of heaven, covered with glory and majesty. He saw him receiving from God dominion, glory and kingship. Through this reception, he was established as king forever and all the nations of the earth adored him.

The historical context of this vision is a response to the political situation of exile in which Israel was at that time. In fact, after having been subjected for many years to foreigner nations and powers, God finally promised to raise someone powerful enough to set his people free. In that perspective, the text teaches us that God has his time to save his people from persecution. Therefore, whatever bad might happen to them, he will intervene and deliver them.

The dream of God's final intervention in history gave birth in Israel to the idea of the expectation of the Messiah. It is in that sense that the book of Revelation presents Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of Israel's dream. As Revelation says, Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth; he is the Alpha and the Omega of all creation. He exists for all time, because he is the one who is and who was and who is to come. By giving his own blood on the cross, he has made us into a kingdom and priests for his God and Father. To him belong glory and power forever.

These two texts allow us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus talks about his kingship. First of all, the context of this Gospel refers to the passion of Jesus. At that time as Jesus was presented before Pilate, he was asked if he was a king. Without refuting the question, Jesus recognized that he was a king. He even said that it was the reason why he was born and came into the world. But at the same time, he added that his kingdom was not of this world.

In order to prove that he was right, Jesus said that if he were a king according to the norms of this world, his attendants would be fighting so that he might not be handed over to the Jews. That is the reason why he declared that his kingdom was not here.

What do we learn from this Gospel? The first thing is about the paradox of Jesus' kingdom. When we talk about the existence of a kingdom, at least some elements have to be taken into account, like a territory on which the sovereign reigns, the subjects over whom he exercises his power, a throne assigned to him, a military strength destined to protect his power and his territory, etc.

And yet, when Jesus says that he is a king, we do not see all these elements. His kingdom obeys other criteria than those we know; it is of another order. His kingdom is invisible in nature and unlimited in territory and power. Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual reality that tries to conquer and win human hearts to God the and not a geographic territory.

The reality of that kingdom has been made evident in the life of Jesus, himself. For instance, unlike the kings of this world, he never sought to occupy the first place in his ministry and life. Instead of commanding, he was obedient until death on the cross. Instead of being served, he served all by his words and acts. He even washed the feet of his disciples so that they, too, do the same toward their fellows. As the excited people wanted to make him a king, he fled to the point of disappointing not only his disciples, but also all those who saw in him a Messiah according to the Jewish political expectations.

While Jesus' concept on kingship is so clear, many in human history have attempted to make the kingdom of Jesus visible in this world through the search for temporal power. We can cite as examples, the pontifical states in Italy and the establishment of the Kingdom of Jesus among the Amerindians in Paraguay by the Jesuits in the 16th century. At times, the triumph of Christ has been identified with the triumph of the Church's leaders on earth. Thank God that all that has changed. Today, the Church has become more humble and more servant than triumphant. But what a journey it has taken us!

The second thing I want to highlight is about the content of Jesus' kingdom. If Jesus' kingdom has nothing to do with power, triumph or domination, it means that it is essentially destined to bear witness to the truth.

In biblical sense, something is true not only when it conforms to the real, but when in its evidence and clarity to the intellect, it leads to the encounter with God. In that sense, we understand why Jesus says that he was born and sent into the world in order to tell us the truth. That truth is that God is our Father; he loves us and wants us to be his children. Because we are his children, we belong to his kingdom, which is the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have become his sons and daughters.

The growth of that Kingdom does not depend on human might, but on our conversion of hearts by letting the truth of Jesus' Gospel guide our lives and actions. That is why we belong to Jesus' kingdom when we live as he did and by putting ourselves at service of one another for the glory of God. We may pretend to do things for Jesus, but it will not help us if we do not do it with him and as he has done it with humility and the love of the truth.

Let us, then, ask Jesus to help us accept his kingship over our hearts and lives. May he conquer our thoughts and actions and teach us to love and serve him by loving and serving one another! May God bless you all!

Daniel 7: 13-14; Revelation 1: 5-8; John 18: 33b-37



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