

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe C/2016

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of leadership. They show that a true leader is the one who rules according to God's will. They invite us to entrust our lives to the leadership of Jesus, our Savior and our King.

The first reading describes the beginning of the kingship of David as he was anointed and established over the house of Israel in Hebron. It describes the circumstances that preceded David's crowning as a shepherd chosen by God to guide his people. It highlights, in particular, his role as the gatherer of his people in whom all the tribes of Israel recognized themselves.

What is behind this text is the idea that leadership is a gift that comes from God. There is also the idea that leadership confers on the elect a special mission for the good of those he is serving. The last idea is related to the truth that a leader needs to have something in common with those he leads so that he comes to incarnate in his own body the deep aspirations of his people.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it talks about the kingship of Jesus, but in the context of his passion and crucifixion. First of all, the Gospel describes the mockeries Jesus received at the crucifixion with regard to his kingship. It shows also the different categories of people who were involved in mocking him and the challenge they raised that he demonstrates that he is king by saving himself.

Then, the Gospel talks about the reaction of the two criminals who were crucified with Jesus by showing their divergent opinion with regard to Jesus' innocence and crucifixion.

After that, the Gospel highlights the plea of the second criminal asking Jesus to remember him when he will be in his kingdom. In the end, it gives the reaction of Jesus who promised him the entrance into paradise.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today, I want to talk about the kingship of Jesus. However, in order to understand this kingship, we need to put it in a historical context.

In fact, in the beginning of his ministry, Jesus often said that the kingdom of God was in the midst of his listeners and they had to convert and believe in the good news. An observation of his teaching shows that, eventually, he identified himself with the kingdom of God, because not only was he the Messiah, but God was with him and he was God.

That is why one of the accusations against him was that he pretended to be the king of the Jews. The inscription on the head of his cross read "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews". Today's Gospel contains such a statement about his kingship.

However, in the stories of the passion, when Pilate asked him if he was a king, Jesus recognized that he was, but he immediately added that his kingdom was not of this world. This detail, indeed, is very important for us.

It means that we cannot reduce Jesus' kingdom to the monarchies or political powers of this world. Jesus is a king *sui generis*, a king in his own way. His

kingdom obeys other rules than those governing our republics or democracies. In that perspective, a territory or an army does not define his kingdom, but rather the possession of the hearts of the human beings he tries to bring to his Father.

That is why the conversion of heart is a key factor and a criterion of adhesion to the kingdom of Jesus. In order to belong to Jesus' kingdom, a passport written with ink is not needed; the only passport worthy of Jesus is a heart that is given to him and his Father.

What is the main practice of Jesus' kingdom? It is love and service. Jesus was the first to love us and serve us. In turn, we have to love one another and serve one another at his example. It is for that reason that we cannot celebrate the feast of Christ the king without asking the questions of the way we exercise our own authorities as parents over our children, as wife or husband over the household, or boss or manager over our employees, etc.

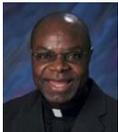
If we do not do that, we would well be good material leaders because we are capable of providing for the needs of our families or producing more for our companies, but we would never be good spiritual leaders over those in our charge.

What is the visible instrument of Jesus' kingdom? It is the cross. Indeed, St Paul is right to say that everything has been reconciled in him, making peace by the blood of his cross. The crowds that looked at Jesus on the cross did not understand it, but the other criminal who was crucified with him and opened his heart to him discovered Jesus' kingdom. He said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom". And Jesus replied, "I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise".

In fact, when we give our heart to Jesus and are forgiven, it is today, and not tomorrow, that a new road in our life is open. That is why the story of this man is the story of each one of us. Whatever we might have done in our past life, Jesus can forgive it when we give him our heart.

Now, let me finish with this question: What is the goal of Jesus' kingdom? The goal of Jesus' kingdom is that in him we live and may have eternal life. Let us, then, ask the Lord Jesus to help us abide in him and belong to his kingdom by giving him our heart. May God bless you all!

2 Samuel 5: 1-3; Colossians 1: 12-20; Luke 23: 35-43



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