

Our Lord Jesus Christ the King B/2009

Each year, we conclude the liturgical year of the Church with the celebration of the feast of Christ the King. When we call Christ “King”, what do we mean by it? What kind of king is he? What is his kingdom all about? Today’s readings try to answer these questions by giving us the right picture of the kingship of Christ and its requirements.

The first reading from the book of Daniel describes a vision the prophet had had about a mystical personage called the Son of man. The Son of man came in the cloud of heaven and reached the place where the Ancient One - who is God – was sitting. From God, he received power and dominion over all the peoples and the nations of the earth. His kingship was so powerful that his dominion was everlasting to the point that nothing would destroy it.

Many years later, Jesus will identify himself with this mystical personage of the Son of man. He will speak of himself as “The Son of man”. His disciples will recognize in him the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel. That is why the book of Revelation presents Jesus as the faithful witness and the ruler of the kings of the earth, who has freed us from our sins at the cost of his blood on the cross. By freeing us from sins, he has made us into a kingdom and priests for his God and Father.

Like the Son of man from the book of Daniel, he will come in the clouds of heaven at the end of time to receive glory and power forever. All the people of the earth will see him, even those who have crucified him. His kingdom will never end because he is the beginning and the end of everything that exists. That is why he is called the Alpha and the Omega. He is the one who is and who was and who is to come.

To call Jesus Alpha and Omega means that he was at the beginning of creation, but he will also be at end of the world. There is nothing that came to be without him and outside of him. As we say in the apostle creed, he will come again to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will never end.

Although Christ is attested as King, his kingship is not similar to that of the kingdoms of this world. His kingdom has nothing to do with worldly power, human triumph or domination. It is essentially, and above all testimony and sacrifice, at the service of the truth.

There has been the temptation in the history of the church to make the kingdom of Jesus visible in this world through the search for temporal power. The existence of 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 are among eloquent examples of such an attempt. At times the triumph of Christ has been identified with the triumph of Church’s leaders on earth. In that perspective, the Church had become “triumphalist”, in direct competition with the other heads of states and nations.

And yet, when we listen to the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate in today’s Gospel, we realize that Jesus’ kingdom is of another type. In fact, Jesus never sought to occupy the first place in his ministry and life; he never wanted to be served, on the contrary he gave an example of

service to all by his words and acts. To crown all that, he washed the feet of his disciples and gave up his life on the cross for us. He negatively reacted to all the attempts to make him accept kingship of this world. And when people wanted to make him 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.

Such facts show that Jesus' kingdom is that of heart and fraternity; it is a kingdom of service to all and a brotherhood between peoples and nations. That is the reason why he was born and sent into the world, namely to tell all the peoples the truth that God is their Father and they are all brothers and sisters, and that they belong to his kingdom, that God loves them and wants them to be his children.

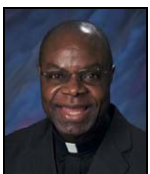
As understood, Jesus' kingdom obeys other principles and criteria than those that used to run our Republics, Empires and Kingdoms. The advance and the growth of Jesus' Kingdom depend on our conversion of hearts by letting the truth of his Gospel guide our lives and actions. We belong to the kingdom of Jesus in so far as we dedicate our lives to the service of our fellow human beings as he did, and by caring for them with love, respect and affection as though God was acting through us.

We will never belong to the Kingdom of Jesus if we are the instigators of conflicts that tear communities apart and contribute to the unsettlement of the situation among us. We will never belong to Jesus' Kingdom if we do not work for forgiveness, peace and understanding among people. Christ will hardly be our King if we do not listen to him, walk with him, and imitate him. We may perhaps pretend to do things for Jesus or work for him, but all that will never be done with him if we do not imitate his humility, his love of truth, his service to others and if we do not follow in his footsteps.

The best way to acknowledge Christ's kingdom is to give Jesus control over our lives, our families, our jobs, etc. We have to give Jesus total sovereignty over our actions, our thoughts, our hearts, our bodies, and all our being. The Kingdom of Jesus calls us to open our hearts to others and embrace strangers, foreigners, immigrants, enemies, the needy and the poor, as Jesus himself would do. Jesus' Kingdom calls us to support each other, love each other, forgive each other, and serve each other at the example of Christ the King.

Let us ask Jesus to be the king and the ruler of our hearts and lives. Let us pray that he conquers our thoughts and actions and teaches 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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