

Solemnity of Christ the King C/2013

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, the messenger of God 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 every leadership comes from above. Because it comes from above, the leader receives a special mission he has to exercise on behalf of God. There is also the idea 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 before him to save himself if he was really the king of the Jews.

Then, the Gospel talks about the reaction of two criminals who were crucified with Jesus. While the first was challenging Jesus to show up his power as a Messiah, the second was defending him by rebuking the first for not understanding the injustice there was for Jesus to be condemned to the same fate with them.

The Gospel finishes with the plea of the second criminal asking Jesus to remember him when he will be in his kingdom. As a reaction, Jesus promised him the entrance into paradise.

What do we learn from this Gospel? As today we celebrate the closing of the Year of faith and the feast of Christ the king, I want to talk about faith in the kingship of Jesus.

In order to understand the kingship of Jesus, 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 is very important, because it allows us understanding 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. His kingdom is not defined by a territory, but rather the possession of a human heart that is turned to God.

That is why the conversion of heart plays a big role in order to adhere to Jesus' kingdom. 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.

What is the 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 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". 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 us finish with the question of the goal of Jesus' kingdom? The goal of Jesus' kingdom is that in him we live and may have eternal life. In order to have eternal life, we need faith in Jesus. As In this year of faith we have followed a lot of teachings in order to grow in faith, let us maintain that faith alive in us. Let us 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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