

## **Solemnity of Christ the King A2023**

Today we celebrate the solemnity of Christ the King of universe. To say that Christ is King does not mean that he reigns on a portion of land that belongs to him, like a president who administers a territory called "Republic" or a King who reigns on his subjects in a monarchy.

The kingdom of Christ is above all a spiritual reality that cannot be reduced to the realm of this world. It is state of affairs in which the heart of a human person and everything else he does are submitted to Christ and God, his Father. When at his Passion, Pilate asked Jesus if he was a King, our Lord answered that he was, but, directly added that his Kingdom was not of this world.

Christ's kingdom has been realized in his victory over death and in his resurrection from the dead. When, in today's second reading, St Paul says that Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet", he points to the fulfillment of Christ's Kingdom. The enemies of Christ are those forces of evil that dominate the world, causing pain and suffering to people. When all these powers of evil will be destroyed, then, the Kingdom of our Lord will be fully established.

The reason why Christ became a human being was that by sharing in our humanity, we too share in his divinity. Since he died and rose for our sake, we share also in his resurrection. As we have been in solidarity with Adam, the first man from whom death came into the world, so we are in solidarity with the risen Christ from whom God brought life back to the world. In these terms, Christ is the leader of a new humanity and a new world in which there will be no more death, no more pain, no more suffering, no more tears. He is the good shepherd who leads God's flock and watches over them with solicitude, leading them to the Kingdom of heaven.

Unlike the shepherds who came before him and failed in their duty, our Lord gives life and leads those who belong to him to more abundant life. The prophet Ezekiel says that because those shepherds failed in their duty, God himself will rescue the sheep. He will take over their responsibilities, tend by himself the sheep, gather the scattered ones and bringing them to rest in good pastures where the lost will be sought out, the strayed brought back and the injured healed.

Christ is the shepherd that the Father sent into the world to rescue us. He is our savior and our King. But, his kingdom is not of this world or like those of this world. His Kingdom is a kingdom of humble service and love. Those who belong to him should become in the midst of the world his hands and his eyes, his mouth and his ears. They should always act toward their brothers and sisters, animated and guided by the law of love, at the example of Christ himself. That is why the building of Jesus' kingdom in this world is made through our service toward our fellows in need.

That is the point of today's Gospel and it is crucial for us. It constitutes the criterion for our last judgment at the end of time. Today's gospel reminds us that we cannot care only for our spirituality, our individual devotion and our personal holiness. We should also do it for the needs of our brothers and sisters. Of course, our spiritual exercises, our devotions are important, but they should not be separated from the works of charity toward our fellow humans in need.

We will be judged, not only according to our personal spirituality, but above all according to our reaction to the needs of our fellow human beings. God's judgment will not depend on and limited to the knowledge we have about him or the teachings of the Church, but also on how we have been sensitive to the needy and on how much help we would have given to others in the name of our faith in Jesus.

What is required of us here is not great things, but small gestures of friendship and solidarity, like giving a meal to a hungry person, a cup of water to a thirsty person, welcoming an immigrant, visiting a sick person, or a prisoner, clothing a naked person, etc. These are simple things we cannot help doing; they have an eternal price; they help us win eternal salvation.

However, our help should be without calculation and must flow from a loving heart. The help that wins the heart of God is that which is given for nothing; that which is done just for the sake of helping someone in need.

Those who helped people in need did not think at all they were helping Christ, and yet they were accumulating their eternal reward. Those who withheld the help to their fellows did not think, either, they were closing their heart and their hand to Jesus. In the end, they were full of regret and remorse: "if we just knew it was you..."

All that teaches us something about the sin of omission we often overlook. It also teaches us that Jesus is hidden in our fellow humans. Jesus confronts us with the truth of his hidden presence. Anytime we give help to someone in need, we give it to Jesus. Anytime we withhold our help toward the needy, it is against Christ. Our task today is to decode the image of Jesus hidden in our fellows in need.

God reaches out to his children through us. It is our duty to serve our fellow humans as Christ has served us until death. The participation in the Christ Kingdom is prepared while we are still on earth through our service to our fellows in need. Anytime we do good to others because of our faith, we are building our participation in Jesus' Kingdom. If we forget the practice of charity, we run the risk of being left out of the Kingdom. The love we have for our fellows is the measure of our love for God. Because the love of God and the love of neighbor are one, what is done to a fellow, good or bad, is done to our Lord and his Father. Whoever does not strive to remove before him whatever harms his fellow does not cooperate in the construction of Jesus' Kingdom.

Because the kingdom of Christ is that of love and service, let us serve him by serving our fellow humans. Because Christ is our king, let us submit ourselves to him so that he reigns in our minds, in our hearts and in our bodies, and transforms us in his image. Have a blessed celebration!

**Ezekiel 34: 11-12, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 15: 20-26, 28; Matthew 25: 31-46**



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