

Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe B2024

Each year, we conclude the liturgical year of the Church with the celebration of the feast of Christ the King of the universe. Each one of the readings of this feast tries to give us in the right picture of what the kingship of Christ is and what its requirements are.

The first reading is the book of the prophet Daniel, written around 166 years before Jesus. In a dramatic vision in the night, Daniel sees four beasts coming from the sea, namely a lion, a bear, a leopard and a monster that crushes everything on its passage. According to him, these beasts represent the kingdoms of the world that have successively oppressed Israel.

At the end, he sees a Son of man coming from heaven to whom God gives all the powers and dominions over the whole world and the nations of the earth. His reign comes at the end when all other kingdoms have disappeared. His dominion and kingship last forever and nothing can destroy them.

From the historical point of view, that prophecy of Daniel was not totally fulfilled. Even if it is true that Israel got rid of foreign enemies at that time, time and again, the country fell through other foreign dominations. For instance, at the time of Jesus, the country was under the domination of Romans.

In the Jewish oral interpretation of the law called "Talmud", there is a story of a man who during a dark night lit a lamp, but the wind blew it out. He lit it a second time, then, a third time, but the wind kept blowing it out. At the end, he said to himself that he would wait until the sunrise. As Israel went repeatedly through foreign dominations in history, the sunrise meant for them the coming of the Messiah. That explains the longing for the messianic time where God will put an end to all the foreign dominations of his people.

Unfortunately, in Israel even today some are still waiting for the Messiah. And yet, the Messiah has already come; we are awaiting his second coming, as he has promised. Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega of every creature that exists, "the one who is and who was and who is to come." He is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of earth. He has saved us from our sins by his blood and made us members of the kingdom of his Father and our Father, his God and our God. That is the testimony we have from the second reading of Revelation.

What is the essence of Christ's kingdom? His kingdom is not of this world; it does not belong to it; it 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.

However, the temptation has always been in history to deny the separation of Church and State, to give to God what belongs to him and to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Even in the history of the church, there was an attempt to make the kingdom of God visible in this world through the search for temporal power. Down the centuries the kingdom of Christ has been confused with the kingdoms of this world. Think about the pontifical states to which the Italian revolution put an end in 1870. Think about the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ among the Indians in Paraguay by the Jesuits in the 16th century.

At times the triumph of Christ has been identified with the triumphs of his representatives on earth. Thus, the Church became “triumphalist”, in direct competition with the other heads of nations. And yet, when we pay attention to our Lord’s response to the question of Pilate, there is no ambiguity about his kingdom. “My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But, as it is my kingdom is not here”. In other words, our Lord’s kingship is of another type.

As a matter of fact, our Lord never sought to occupy the first place in his ministry and life. He never wanted to be served; he gave an example of service to all by his words and acts. He washed the feet of his disciples and gave up his life on the cross. When people wanted to make him king, he fled to the point of disappointing the messianic expectations of his own disciples.

Such facts show that our Lord’s kingdom is that of heart and fraternity, of service and brotherhood between peoples and nations. This 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.

The advancement of our Lord’ kingdom corresponds to other criteria than those used to judge the growth of our Republics and Kingdoms. Its growth depends on our conversion of hearts by letting the truth of the Gospel guide our lives and actions. We belong to the kingdom of our Lord in so far as we dedicate our lives to the service of our fellow human beings, taking care of them with respect and affection as though God was acting through us.

Where people strive to transcend conflicts and to live in peace with one another, where people forgive one another, knowing that without forgiveness life is impossible, there our Lord’s kingdom is present. The number of the baptized, the effectiveness of our ecclesial structures or the beauty of our cathedrals, do not determine the kingdom of our Lord. If we do not make our Lord the king of our hearts and our lives, we do not belong to his kingdom.

Let us allow our Lord to be the king and the ruler of 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! Amen!

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



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