

Christ, King of the Universe

Solemnity of Christ the King - Jn 18:33b-37

Ave Maria Catholic Church, November 21, 2021 - Fr. David M Vidal

Jesu, rex admirabilis! This is how the prayer of Saint Bernard opens: *O Jesus, King most wonderful!* Jesus is our most wonderful King! This is what revelation teaches us. The Gospels tell us that Jesus is King.

The Virgin Mary received this message, *“The Lord will give to Him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.”* (Lk 1: 32-33) The Magi travelled to Jerusalem with the question, *“Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?”* (Matt 2:2)

And again and again, Jesus is presented as King. When he entered Jerusalem for the last time the crowd witnessed in that action, the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of Zechariah, *“Behold, your king is coming.”* (Zech 9:9) Then, they greeted him saying, *“Blessed be the king who comes in the name of the Lord.”* (Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13)

It was the charge that was brought before Pilate, *“We found this man perverting our nation...saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”* (Lk. 23:2) *“If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar.”* (John 19:12)

It was a charge that was used against the followers of Christ. Then, in Thessalonica they said, *“They are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”* (Acts 17:7)

Christ, the King speaks in the Work of Creation

Christ the King is consubstantial with the Father. Consequently, and above all we can say that Christ is King because of his divinity.

His dominion spans over all creation. And his Kingdom is manifested in the very work of creation. From the beginning, every creature bears the seal of his Kingdom! Since, *“in him everything in heaven and on earth was created”*. This is, therefore, the reign of the Eternal Word.

The eternal reign of God over creation is carried out through the Word and Son. Creation is the beginning of the Kingdom of God. It is the Kingdom of the Father in the Son - and through the Son.

The Word *“was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”* (John 1:2-3)

This is explained in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians: *"He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible all were created through him, and for him. He is before all else, that is. In him everything continues in being"* (Col 1:15-17).

Christ, the King speaks in the Work of Redemption

"For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth..." (Jn 18 37)

He came to proclaim the Kingdom of truth: the truth about God and man; the truth about grace and sin. In this Kingdom, the throne is the Cross, the rules are the Beatitudes, and the reward is Heaven. It is the opposite of the Kingdom of the devil, the kingdom of lies, because Satan is the father of lies.

Jesus is on the throne of Cross and from this throne Jesus speaks the truth about man, because it speaks about the infirmities of humanity, and the greatness of God. The Cross speaks about the ugliness of sin and the beauty of grace. Then, we discover with Saint Paul that *"He, [the Father] rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins,"* (Col 1:12-13).

Consequently, by means of the Cross, he became Christ the King, in the Kingdom of truth.

The Words of our King are Words of Everlasting Life

His agony on Calvary was accompanied by the scorn of some Jewish leaders who reproached him: *"He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God"* (Lk 23:35). The soldiers mocked him, *"If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself"* (Lk 23:37). Their words were echoed by one of the two criminals crucified with him: *"Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us"* (Lk 23:39).

But in contrast to these insults and curses another voice was heard, the voice of one who was crucified with him, known from tradition as the "good thief". He rebuked his companion and turned to Jesus: *"Jesus, remember me when you enter upon your reign"* (Lk 23:42). On one hand, this kingdom was an object of contempt, while on the other, it became the object of a profession of faith and hope.

Our Lord's response to this confession says it all: *"I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise"* (Lk 23:43). Only Christ has words of everlasting life because only Christ can assure Heaven.

Christ is King, first, because he is consubstantial with the Father; then as man, he is King by means of his Cross, on which he redeemed all mankind; and finally, his royal power was confirmed by his Resurrection from the dead, his royal power was validated by his suffering of death and the consequent triumph of resurrection.

In this way, we can see the two dimensions of Christ's Kingdom. His temporal Kingdom, which begins here on earth, and is manifested in the work of Creation and Redemption. His eternal Kingdom, which is beyond time, and is manifested in the Resurrection.

Christ must Reign (1 Cor 15:25)

First of all, **He must reign over us:** Then it is necessary to listen to his words. How can we recognize that we truly pay attention to his teachings? Our love is made known more in deeds than in words. *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* (Mt 7:21)

He must reign over all: If this conviction does not exist, the apostolic work does not make any sense, and preaching the Gospel is truly foolishness. Without this conviction, the ones called to be heralds of the word of God would not exist. Without the conviction that Christ must reign, people become preachers of their own kingdoms and of themselves.

The truth and beauty of Christ's kingdom ignited the heart of Saint Paul who cried out: *"Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel"* (1 Cor 9:16). Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel because Jesus must reign!

Let us accept Christ's Kingdom in our lives. Let us listen to Our Most wonderful King and let us welcome His Kingdom! Let us preach the Kingdom of Christ with our words and actions. Amen.