

November 20 XXXIV Sunday in Ordinary Times

This Sunday, at the end of Church's liturgical year, the readings describe the enthronement of the victorious Christ as King in Heaven in all his glory. Instituting this Feast of Christ the King in 1925, Pope Pius XI proclaimed: "Pax Christi in regno Christi" (the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ). This means that we live in the peace of Christ when we surrender our lives to him every day, accept him as our God, Savior and King and allow him to rule our lives.

The title "Christ the King" has its roots both in Scripture and in the whole theology of the Kingdom of God. In most of the Messianic prophecies given in the Old Testament books of Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, Christ the Messiah is represented as a King. In the Annunciation, recorded in Lk 13:2-33, we read: "The Lord God will make him a King, as his ancestor David was, and He will be the King of the descendants of Jacob forever and His Kingdom will never end."

In fact, the Kingdom of God is the center of Jesus' teaching. The Magi from the Far East came to Jerusalem and asked the question: (Mt. 2:2) "Where is the baby born to be the King of the Jews? We saw his star... and we have come to worship him." During the royal reception given to Jesus on Palm Sunday, the Jews shouted: (Lk 19:38) "God bless the King, who comes in the name of the Lord." During the trial of Jesus described in today's Gospel, Pilate asked the question: (Jn 18:33): "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied: "You say that I am a king. I was born and came into this world for this one purpose, to bear witness to the Truth" (Jn 18:37).

The first reading (II Samuel 5:1-3) describes all the tribes of Israel choosing Israel's second king, the great David, as their "shepherd" and "commander." David's successful 40-year reign became the model for the hoped-for Messiah—the Christ or the Anointed One in later Judaism. In the second reading (Col 1:12-20), Paul quoting an early Christian hymn, assures the Colossian Christians of: (1) the primacy of Christ over and above all angels and cosmic powers; (2) the value and necessity of the cross; and (3) the cosmic effects of salvation.

Today's Gospel (Lk 23:35-43), referring to the sign board hung by the order of Pilate on the cross of Jesus, "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews," presents it as an imperial admission of the kingship of Christ, although it was intended to serve as a three-fold mockery. It prompted the Jewish leaders to call out, "He saved

others, let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God,” and the soldiers to shout at Jesus, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself,” and the thief on Jesus’ left side to challenge him, “Aren’t you the Messiah? Then save yourself and us.” Pilate may have had his own reasons for writing this inscription on the board: to protect himself from being charged with bowing to the pressure of the mob; to mock Jesus and thereby to appease the Jewish leaders; and to forewarn other would-be revolutionaries that their rebellion against the empire would be similarly extinguished. But Pilate was unknowingly accepting the person and mission of Jesus as King and Savior. The repentant thief accepts Jesus as his Savior, calling Jesus Jeshuah, or Jesus, meaning “the Lord saves!” Jesus assured the thief that he had the power to promise him a share in Jesus’ everlasting reign: “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise!” (Lk 23:43)

1) We need to accept Christ the King as our Lord, King, and Savior and surrender our lives to him. We surrender our lives to Jesus every day when we give priority to his teaching in our daily choices, especially in moral decisions. We should not exclude Christ our King from any area of our personal or family lives. In other words, Christ must be in full charge of our lives, and we must give him sovereign power over our bodies, our thoughts, our heart and our will.

2) We need to be serving disciples of a serving King. Jesus declared that he came not to be served but to serve and showed us the spirit of service by washing of the feet of his disciples. We become Jesus’ followers when we recognize his presence in everyone, especially the poor, the sick, the outcast, and the marginalized in the society and render humble and loving service to Jesus in each of them.

3) We need to accept Jesus Christ as the King of love. Jesus came to proclaim to all of us the Good News of God’s love and salvation, gave us his new commandment of love: “Love one another as I have loved you,” (Jn 13:34), and demonstrated that love by dying for us sinners. We accept Jesus as our King of love when we love others as Jesus loved, unconditionally, sacrificially, and with agape love.