

13. March 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“We have no king but Caesar”

Jn 19:13-16

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, and in Hebrew, Gab'batha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

This is the hour of the ultimate betrayal of the Lord who came to redeem humanity. It is a betrayal of God and man, for how can the creature loved by God kill its Creator?

Pilate, the Roman procurator, had still tried not to be drawn into this betrayal of the Lord. He had even heard Jesus calling himself "King" and presenting himself as such to those who wanted him dead: "*Behold your King!*" But it was in vain. Driven by blind hatred, they called for His crucifixion. It was as if they had lost their minds and were possessed by hatred.

Pilate asked them again, '*Shall I crucify your King?*' and the chief priests gave the answer that exposed them: "*We have no king but Caesar.*"

They did not want a divine king! They preferred the emperor of the foreign occupation. It could be said that first they preferred a robber and a murderer, then they preferred a pagan emperor, and in the end, even if they were not aware of it, they preferred the devil to the Son of God.

This passage recalls a reflection on the fall of the angels: God would have revealed to the angels His plan that the Second Person of the Trinity should become man in order to be Lord over men and angels. This plan would have so enraged Lucifer that he has since turned against God.

If this was indeed the case, then we could see in today's passage Lucifer's hatred of the Son of God, using the High Priest and the other enemies of the Lord to carry out his plan of iniquity.

And what happened to Pilate? After the hateful cries of the blinded Jews and their appeal to Caesar, he surrendered. Even though, according to Matthew's Gospel, Pilate washed his hands in front of the people and exclaimed, "*I am innocent of this man's blood*" (Mt 27:24), he was still complicit in the death of the Lord. He should never have allowed Jesus to be crucified. To this day, in the Creed of the Church, his name echoes in connection with the crucifixion of Jesus.

With these brief reflections on today's passage, I will pause for a moment in the systematic meditation on the Gospel of John that we have been doing over the last few months. We are only a few verses away from the account of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Lord, and I will reserve those chapters for when they coincide with the liturgical seasons.

I hope that the meditations on the Gospel of John have been helpful to many listeners. For all of us they have been very fruitful and have brought us closer to the Lord.

Between now and Holy Week, I will use the daily meditations to give some guidelines on how we can make the most of this Lenten season.