

20. November 2022

## The Reign of Christ

Lk 23:35b-43

*At that time, the leaders jeered at him with the words, 'He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' The soldiers mocked him too, coming up to him, offering him vinegar, and saying, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews'. One of the criminals hanging there abused him: 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He answered him, 'In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'*

Before entering the new Liturgical Year, the Church celebrates the Reign of Christ.

It is a Kingdom that is not of this world, as Jesus testifies before Pilate (cf. Jn 18:36). And, in fact, Jesus exercises His dominion in a very different way from how the powerful of this world usually do. "*The rulers of the Gentiles rule over them,*" the Lord tells us (Mt 20:25), and then points out to His disciples how authority is to be exercised in His Kingdom: "*Anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant*" (v. 26).

Our King rules from the Cross!

It was there that God showed us the extent of His love; that He is "the greatest in love", to the point of laying down His life even for His enemies. Thus the Lord breaks every false claim to dominion, every abuse of power, because He has once and for all fixed the measure - which is Himself - and has given us the proof of what true sovereignty means. Whoever wants to belong to the "great ones" in the Kingdom of Christ must resemble the Lord, and in their life must shine forth the same love that made Jesus capable of pleading for his enemies even on the Cross (cf. Lk 23:34).

Therefore, the Kingdom of the Lord is a Reign of love and truth. This was not understood by the leaders of the Jewish people. A king who does not demonstrate His power by physical force; a king who does not defend Himself and allows them to do with Him as they wish, provokes the mockery of the magistrates. Even more so when He Himself had claimed to be the Son of God, the Chosen One... Let Him prove it and save Himself from His desperate situation!

The soldiers, who were in the service of the kingdom of this world, did the same... The apparent helplessness of the Lord causes them to mock Him, thus wanting to humiliate Him.

Even one of the evildoers who was crucified next to Him, feels superior and joins the chorus of mockery.

But the Lord is silent!

Only one of those men perceived something of the mystery of the Lord's love on the Cross. Even though burdened with guilt, he was a comfort to Jesus: one who defended him, one who recognized that an innocent man had been crucified, one who opened his heart to the Lord and believed in Him, *"Remember me when you come into your Kingdom."*

How much we sinners can identify with him! How consoling it is to know that the Lord said to him, *"I assure you that this very day you will be with me in Paradise!"* A King who pities and forgives the sinner; a King who pleads for His executioners; who possesses a Kingdom to which all are invited... All can enter this Kingdom through Him who is the "greatest in love": God Himself.

Jesus' heart is wide open! Jesus is the door to this Kingdom! We human beings have only to accept His love and follow Him into His Kingdom. He offers Himself to all peoples and on the Cross He paid for all sins. He is our true King.

Here in Jerusalem, where I am at the present moment, I will thank the Lord on Calvary for having redeemed us and for not having come down from the Cross.

In eternity we will be able to live out His Kingdom to the full.... The best is yet to come!