

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (A)  
(Ezekiel 34:11-12. 15-17 / Matthew 25:31-46)  
22.11.2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

The kingship of Christ spans the ages, from the beginning to the end of time. It culminated in the Incarnation. Christ's kingship is universal. Everybody and everything are submitted to Christ the King. If there is something which is really inclusive, it is Christ's kingship.

Everyone and everything was created by God the Father through Christ. Day after day, through Christ, God the Father continues his work of creation in the world and in each one of us. Creation by the Father through Christ is an on-going process: We were not created by God only once when we were conceived. God continues to create us in Christ over and over again.

Christ became flesh to reveal the Father's love to the world, and to set humankind free from sin and the fear of death through His passion, death and resurrection. The Cross is really the throne on which Christ reigns and from which Christ sets us free.

Christ will come again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. Then, having submitted the whole of creation to himself, Christ will present it along with Himself to his heavenly Father.

Christ the King is not just one all-powerful king among or above the most powerful monarchs of the earth. His kingship is unique. That being said, his supreme authority does not hinder him from being close to each and every human person without exception, the little no less than the great: those who are ignored, disdained, rejected as much as those to whom people are attentive. In Christ's kingship, the universal and the particular go hand in hand.

This is clearly suggested in the first reading from the prophet Ezekiel which invites us to consider Christ the King as a shepherd. A shepherd exercises an undeniable authority over the whole flock, but at the same time is very close to each one of his sheep. He surrounds them all with care and thoughtfulness. He knows whether each one of the ewes is doing well or not. He pastures them with much prudent care. What is said of the shepherd in this reading describes what Christ the King is like in our regard, how He behaves with us:

I quote: "I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view...I shall rescue my sheep from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness. I myself will pasture my sheep. I myself will show them where to rest... I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy".

This is the kind of kingship Christ exercises. Christ's kingship is not about power, domination or pride. Christ's kingship is about mercy, compassion and tenderness. Christ cares for the poor and the needy, without forgetting those who have plenty.

At the end of the passage of Ezekiel, the question of judgment enters in: “As for you, my sheep, the Lord says this: I will judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and he-goats”. This judgement is solemnly presented in the gospel passage we have heard. This is something we proclaim belief in every Sunday in the Creed: “Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead”.

If we are honest, we have to confess that we don't like the idea of a judgment. But if we read the gospel narrative attentively, when we do so, it becomes evident that the coming judgment will not be another's judgement, but our own self judgment. In fact, we shall judge ourselves by our deeds and our omissions. The point we have to grasp is that we are called to live and act here and now as Christ lived and acted when he walked this earth: feeding the hungry, giving a cup of water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the prisoner. This is doing what Jesus did. The gospel invites to go one step further: It invites us to recognize Christ in the poor and the needy: “In so far as you did (or neglected to do) this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it (or you neglected to do it) to me.”

What Jesus invites us to live is both simple and very exacting, some would say very challenging. To love Jesus in prayer is one thing. But to love the poor who crosses our path, whoever he or she is, because Jesus identifies himself with that person is another. The latter is much more difficult. What this is might be said to be nothing other than the preferential love for the poor and the needy which is at the heart of the gospel and which Pope Francis constantly invites us to practice. We cannot live such preferential love for the poor and the needy out of our own strength alone. It is only by the grace of God asked for in prayer that we can do so.

If we believe that every human being without exception was created by God the Father in Christ, the consequence is that we should see all our brothers and sisters in humanity as we see ourselves: sons and daughters of the one heavenly Father who brought us all into being, inviting us to love one another as members of one family should.

This is what the judgment spoken of in the Scriptures is all about. A path is opened up for us by Jesus. It is an exacting path which reveals the trust Jesus has placed in us. Let us not disappoint Him in His expectation. Let us give a wholehearted response to the Lord's invitation. Let us welcome each and every human being, whoever or whatever they are, as a brother or sister. In doing so, we shall contribute to the coming of God's kingdom. Amen!