

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
Last Sunday in Ordinary Time
Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe
November 20, 2022**

Lectionary Readings:

2 Samuel 5:1-3	God’s choice, David, is anointed as king.
Psalms 122:1-5	We long for the Lord’s house.
Colossians 1:12-20	We were brought into the kingdom of Christ.
Luke 23:35-43	Our King, a Crucified Lord, grants salvation.

Luke:

Luke has a point of view as he writes the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its sequel in the Acts of the Apostles. It is a theological point of view. At the heart of the message for Luke, God is present in Jesus Christ, and God’s power and reign is already at work for the fulfillment of God’s ultimate intentions for the world. The “reign of God,” the “rule of God” over all creation, can be found in the birth, in the ministry, in the preaching, in the suffering, and in the dying of Jesus. Also, in the resurrection and in the glorification of Jesus Christ. In the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Then, again, in the lives, in the ministry, in the suffering and dying of those disciples: in their preaching and in their passing into the glory of heaven. The reign of God is here, already, now.

Some of us conceive the reign of God as something that will happen at the end of time, when the earth has passed away, when all things have been transformed into spirit. We imagine a worldly world, a secular reality, not yet penetrated by sacredness and spirituality: even a Church reality that is not yet part of the reign of God, a reign of God that will happen only in some distant future. That is definitely not Luke’s view. With Luke, neither is there any discontinuity between the events of the life of Jesus and the events in the life of the Christian community. It is all one continuous evolution of God’s purposes, God’s work, God’s power to transform and to save. The Church, at its origin, and in its continuing life, extends the work of God in time and space.

So, the death of Jesus on the cross is not just the death of the one person. It is the experience that resonates through the life of the Church community. Just as Jesus will be taken up into the realm of the heavenly Father, so, also, those who are with him in faith and love will be taken. They are already with him, since he cannot be separated from the presence of God even in his dying on the cross. The reign of God is present in Jesus Christ even as he is dying on Calvary.

Jesus can well say to the ‘good thief’ dying beside him, “*Today*, you will be with me in paradise.” Since the reign of God is present in Jesus, then Jesus is its king. Those who know him and who want to share in his values and in his works are part of that whole system of spiritual power that the ancients called a “reign” or a “rule.” A kingdom is not a place with geographical boundaries. It is a system, an organism powered by energies and values that derive from the head of that system. The kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ consists in the realm of love, of

patience, of mercy, of compassion, of forgiveness, and of peace.

The “remember me” of the criminal dying with Jesus indicates a willingness to be part of what Jesus stands for. We need to say to the Lord, “Remember me.”

Samuel:

Originally a single book, now divided into two, Samuel provides a theological history of the transition from God’s rule over Israel through “Judges,” the last of which is Samuel himself, to God’s rule through kings, beginning with Saul and his successor, David. David was anointed three times as king: first, by Samuel, upon being chosen by God (1 Samuel 16:13); secondly, by the elders of Judah, his own tribe (1 Samuel 2:4); and finally, here, by representations from all the tribes. These anointings mark a growing acceptance of David’s leadership over Israel. The Gospel writers do not hesitate to identify Jesus as the son of David, in the line of succession to the throne over God’s people.

Colossians:

Paul admonishes the community at Colossae for adding undue doctrines and practices to the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. Christ is sufficient. There is no need for additions from other traditions: from Jewish sources, from pagan mystery cults, from Greek philosophy. Redemption, or *release*, comes from Jesus Christ alone.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. We have come a long way since we began the liturgical year. Have you been able to keep track of sacred time as it moved along within the secular time and events of the past year? What were some of the things that happened in your life that turned out to be graces from God, interventions from the Master of the Universe for your salvation? Can you share some of the events of the past year that brought you closer to a completion of the kingdom of God in your life?

2. What do we want Jesus to remember about us as he hangs dying on the cross? Have we asked him to call us to be with him in his glory? Are we willing to acknowledge that we need to die with him in order to rise with him? That we need to repent of our sins, to be converted, to change in order to have a share in his kingdom?

3. Do we realize that entering into the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ requires that we adopt the Gospel as our way of living? Are we willing to live by the values of the Sermon on the Mount? Can we accompany Jesus on his way toward Jerusalem, observing his words and his works, buying into his sense of compassion, his uncompromising commitment to the heavenly Father, his courage and nobility of heart? What are some of the ways we can do these works in the concrete experience of our daily living?

SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION

Choose a ministry for service to the church community to which you belong as an expression of your commitment to the kingdom of God in Christ. Choose an apostolic work where you will witness to the Gospel outside the walls of the institutional Church, in service to people who need you and your care.

PRAYER

O Blessed Virgin Mary, standing at the foot of the cross of Jesus your Son, take me to be your child. Fold me in your embrace. Present me to him as one of your other children.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

Some modern-day Christian artists have attempted to depict Christ on the cross vested in either priestly garments or in kingly robes and crowned in majesty: Christ the High Priest of the New Covenant or Christ the King but, in both instances, still closely identified with the cross of suffering and dying. The Christian notion of Messiah must be rooted in the Passion and death of Christ. It is out of this total surrender to the human condition and to total obedience to the Father that Jesus comes to the anointing as Priest and King.

When Peter speaks of Jesus as Messiah, the Lord immediately goes to great length to add that this messiahship needs to be connected and identified with his impending Passion (Matthew 16:16-23). This Messiah is both from heaven and from earth. He “has come down from heaven,” and he undergoes the fate of all flesh, dying like all humans. He is Son of God and Suffering Servant, too. “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (John 3:13; Matthew 20:28).

The true meaning of Jesus’ kingship is revealed only when he is raised high on the cross (John 19:19-22; Luke 23:39-43). That is the truth of the Christ who is our King. Mark’s Gospel begins and ends with the affirmation that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. “This is the good news about Jesus Christ, Son of God” (Mark 1:1). After Jesus has died on the cross, the centurion says, “This man really was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

Peter will announce to all the people after Jesus has been raised from the dead, “Let all the house of Israel also know assuredly that God has made him (Jesus) both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). Our King hangs not only in death upon the cross but has also been raised and glorified by the heavenly Father. There is no other Christian value or principle more central to our experience of faith and of salvation than the anointing of Jesus Christ as Lord and King, the same Jesus who bore our sins upon the cross and who brings us with him into the realm of new life in God through his resurrection. Already, too, he has gone before us to the kingdom of God the Father where he prepares a place for us.