

Sunday 34th in Ordinary Time: Christ the King (A)

Gospel text (Mt 25,31-46): Jesus said to his disciples, «When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all his angels, He will sit on the throne of his Glory. All the nations will be brought before him, and as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, so will He do with them, placing the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

»The King will say to those on his right: ‘Come, blessed of my Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me into your house. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to see me’. Then the good people will ask him: ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you food; thirsty and give you drink, or a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to see you?’. The King will answer, ‘Truly, I say to you: whenever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me’.

»Then he will say to those on his left: ‘Go, cursed people, out of my sight into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you did not give me anything to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you did not welcome me into your house; I was naked and you did not clothe me; I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me’. They, too, will ask: ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked or a stranger, sick or in prison, and did not help you?’. The King will answer them: ‘Truly, I say to you: whatever you did not do for one of these little ones, you did not do for me’.

And these will go into eternal punishment, but the just to eternal life».

«Whenever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me»

Fr, Antoni POU OSB Monk of Montserrat
(Montserrat, Barcelona, Spain)

Today's Jesus speaks to us of the definite judgment. And with this metaphoric image about sheep and goats, He makes us realize that it will be a judgment of love. «We shall be judged on love», St. John of the Cross tells us.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, another mystic, in his meditation *Contemplation to Attain Love*, also reminds us “that love is proven not in words but in actions”. And today's Gospel is very illustrative of this fact. Every act of charity we perform, we do it to the very Christ: «For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me into your house. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to see me» (Mt 25:34-36). Even more so: «Whenever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me» (Mt 25:40).

This evangelic passage, which keeps our feet on solid ground, places the feast of Christ the King in its proper place. Christ's royalty has nothing to do with arrogance, but it simply is the fundamental reality of existence: love will have the last word.

Jesus shows us that the true meaning of his royalty —or authority— lies upon service to others. He claimed to be ‘Teacher’ and ‘Master’ (cf. Jn 13:13), and also that He was a King (cf. Jn 18:37), but he practiced his leadership by washing his disciples' feet (cf. Jn 13:4 ff.), and He reigned by giving his life on the Cross. First, Jesus Christ reigns from a humble cradle (in a lonely manger!) and, afterwards, from a very uncomfortable throne, that is, the Cross.

On the Cross there was an inscription that said «Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews» (Jn 19:19): what appearances seem to deny, the profound reality of the mystery of God confirms it, inasmuch Jesus reigns from his Cross and He judges us in love. «We shall be judged on love».