

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

Gospel text (Lk 23,35-43): The people stood by watching. As for the rulers, they jeered at him, saying to one another, «Let the man who saved others now save himself, for he is the Messiah, the chosen one of God!». The soldiers also mocked him and when they drew near to offer him bitter wine, they said, «So you are the king of the Jews? Free yourself!». For above him was an inscription which read, «This is the King of the Jews».

One of the criminals hanging with Jesus insulted him, «So you are the Messiah? Save yourself and us as well!». But the other rebuked him, saying, «Have you no fear of God, you who received the same sentence as he did? For us it is just: this is payment for what we have done. But this man has done nothing wrong». And he said, «Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom». Jesus replied, «Truly, you will be with me today in paradise».

«This is the King of the Jews»

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Today's Gospel makes us raise our eyes to the cross on which Christ is in agony on Calvary. Here we see the Good Shepherd giving up his life for his flock. And, there up high is the sign that reads, «This is the King of the Jews» (Lk 23,38). This man who is suffering so horribly whose face has been so disfigured, is the King? Could it be possible? The good thief, one of the two men condemned at each side of Jesus, understands. He says with faith, «Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom» (Lk 23,42). Jesus' reply is consoling and certain, «Truly, you will be with me today in paradise»(Lk 23,43).

Yes, we profess that Jesus is King. “King” with a capital “K”. Nobody could ever be at such a level of royalty. The Kingdom of God is not of this world. It is a Kingdom that is entered through Christian conversion. A Kingdom of truth and life, a Kingdom of holiness and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace. A Kingdom that is born from the Blood and water that pours from Jesus' side.

The Kingdom of God was a primordial theme in Our Lord's teaching. He never ceased to invite people to enter it. Once, in the Sermon on the Mount, He proclaimed blessed the poor in spirit, for they would inherit the Kingdom.

Origenes, commenting on Jesus' saying that «The Kingdom of God is amongst you» (Lk 17,21), explains that he who asks that the Kingdom of God comes, is rightly doing so of the Kingdom of God that he has in his interior, that it be born, be fruitful and that it mature. He adds that «the Kingdom of God that we have inside us, if we progress in a continuous way, will achieve its fullness when that which the apostle says is accomplished: that Christ, once his enemies are subdued, will put His Kingdom in the Hands of God The Father, and that way God will be everything in everybody». The writer exhorts us to always say «Hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come».

We should live in the Kingdom now with holiness and we should be witnesses to the charity that testifies the authenticity of faith and hope.