The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 23:35-43): The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me 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, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me 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.

Origen, commenting on Jesus' saying that “The kingdom of God is among 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 continuos 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.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Among men, punishment follows confession; before God, instead, salvation follows confession" (Saint John Chrysostom)

- “Jesus’ promise to the good thief gives us great hope: it tells us that God’s grace is always greater than the prayer which sought it. The Lord always grants more, he is so generous, he always gives more than what he has been asked: you ask him to remember you, and he brings you into his kingdom!” (Francis)

- “... The parable of the poor man Lazarus and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief(cf. Lc 23:43) ... speak of a final destiny of the soul (cf. Mt 16:26) -a destiny which can be different for some and for others” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 1021)