

SUNDAY REFLECTION WITH FR. TONY

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE UNIVERSAL KING

Today's liturgy of the Solemnity of Christ, the universal King brings to our consciousness that as Christians we are expected to be under the kingship of Jesus the universal King. Today's celebration once again challenges us to always make Christ the king of our lives, the king of our families, the king of our parish, the king of our county, the king of our state and the king of our country.

On the last Sunday of every liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Christ the King. The full title of today's celebration is the "Solemnity of Christ the Universal King." What that means is that Christ is the king of the entire universe, the cosmos. He is king not only of the earth, but of all the planets and galaxies that populate the universe. He is king of all times, from the dawn of creation until the end of the world. That is what the liturgy of Easter Vigil says about him: "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega, all time belongs to him, and all ages; to him be glory and power, through every age and for ever. Amen"

But is Christ really a king? His cotemporaries must have thought that it was a huge joke. When Pilate placed above the dying Jesus the inscription, "This is the king of the Jews", he did not mean to be taken seriously. The soldiers who crucified him did not believe that he was a king either. That was why they challenged him to save himself if he was the king of the Jews.

You can hardly blame those people. There was really nothing about Jesus to suggest that he was a king, apart from the fact that he was descendant from King David and he was not only the person to lay claim to that. The circumstance of his birth does not show anything regal. He was born in a stable, not in a royal palace. His parents must have been pretty poor people, since all they could offer at his presentation were "a pair of turtle doves and two young pigeons." He grew up in a remote village that made Nathaniel ask, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" His profession was carpentry and he went on to become a wandering teacher who had nowhere to lay his head. How can such a person be a king?

Jesus himself provided the answer when he told Pilate, "My kingdom is not from this world." That is to say that his kingdom is not like the kingdoms that the people are familiar with in this world; it is not a worldly kingdom. To begin with, his kingdom is not a territory or geographical entity. It does not operate with the same laws as the kingdom of this world. It does not have a constitution, written or unwritten. Rather, the supreme Law in that kingdom is Love, love God above all things and love one's neighbor as oneself. The relationship between the citizens of that kingdom is characterized by service. It is a kingdom where whoever wishes to be the greatest must be the servant, and whoever wishes to be the first, must be slave to all." (Mark 10: 43- 44).

Where in this world can you find such a kingdom? It is to be found in the hearts of people. That is the kingdom Jesus came to establish in the world. In the words of the Second Vatican Council and in the words of our preface today, it is "a Kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." Those who belong to that kingdom are people who, like the "Good Thief", recognize their need to belong to such a kingdom and ask Jesus to admit them there. They are the ones who will hear him say, "Today you will be with me in paradise"

As we continue our pilgrim journey here on earth, let us ask God to give us the grace to always pay allegiance to Christ as the king and Lord of our lives, so that we will be admitted into his eternal Kingdom.