

Christ the King - C  
II Samuel 5:1-3;  
Colossians 1:12-20;  
Luke 23:35-43  
Little Flower - 11/20/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Unlike many of our liturgical feasts which have been celebrated for centuries, the Solemnity of Christ the King is a relatively recent addition to the liturgical calendar. Pope Pius XI instituted this feast at the end of the 1925 Holy Year to emphasize the Lordship of Jesus over both creation and salvation, over both the universe and history.

Christ's universal kingship over creation and the universe is evident in Paul's Letter to the Colossians: "*For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth ...all things were created through him and for him... in him all things hold together.*" All things were created through Christ, all things were created for Christ, in Christ all things hold together!

The most powerful part of the three-part statement is that "*in him all things hold together.*" If Jesus stopped loving us or the world for even an instant, we and the world would not die. We and the world would cease to exist! Therefore, Jesus is truly Lord of heaven and earth. On a personal level, what this means is that Jesus has never stopped loving any one of us even for an instant no matter what we may have done, or we would not be here today.

The second part of this reading suggests that Jesus is Lord of history and salvation. It is in Him that we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, because "*he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.*" He reconciled us to God and to one another. Therefore, "*he is the head of the body, the church.*"

For me, the kingship or Lordship of Jesus is never more evident than when I think about all that I cannot control. When we are faced with what we cannot control and/or with chaos in our own lives and in our world, faith challenges us to trust in Jesus, to entrust our lives and our futures to Jesus, because he is the Lord of life.

Jesus clearly is not a worldly king. Today's Gospel has the rulers, soldiers, and even one of the criminals crucified with him mocking him as he hung upon the cross. The first clue to the nature of Jesus' kingship is in the first reading. The Lord said to David, the king from whom Jesus descended, "*You shall shepherd my people Israel...*" Jesus, therefore, is, a shepherd king. Indeed, Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep by name, who leads them where they should go, who watches over and protects his sheep, and who lays down his life for them.

Likewise, the kingdom of Christ is not a worldly kingdom. The kingdom of Christ is not the same as the kingdom of God. The kingdom of Christ lives within our hearts. According to today's Preface, the kingdom of Christ is "a kingdom of truth and life,...holiness and grace,... justice, love, and peace." Jesus wants us to help create a world in which these values reign in the hearts of all people, in other words, a world very different from the world in which we are living. For these values to reign in the hearts of all people, we have to change our hearts and encourage others to change their hearts, i.e., to turn away from selfishness and sin and turn toward God, others, and love.

My brothers and sisters, today marks the end of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Both Scripture and Pope Francis suggest that mercy, i.e., forgiveness and compassion, are God's defining qualities. Today's Gospel gives us a beautiful illustration of the superabundant mercy of God in Jesus. Although Jesus himself was dying on the cross, when one of the criminals crucified with him 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.*"