

Sunday, November 25, 2018

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Daniel 7:13-14

2nd Reading: Revelation 1:5-8

Responsorial: Psalm 93:1-2, 5

Gospel: John 18:33-37

The Difference between Jesus' Kingdom and Kingdoms of This World

My kingdom does not belong to this world. (John 18:36)

According to Scripture, Cain, who killed his brother Abel, also founded the first city (Genesis 4:17). From that point on, violence has been a part of every kingdom in history. Just about any ruler you can name has used some form of violence in order to “keep the peace” and hold onto their power. Even the great King David advised his son Solomon to assassinate his political opponent as a way of consolidating Solomon’s rule after David’s death (1 Kings 2).

No wonder Jesus said his kingdom was not of “this world” (John 18:36)! He came as the “Prince of Peace,” not a calculating dictator (Isaiah 9:5). This is what makes today’s Feast of Christ the King so special. It’s the celebration of a new kind of King, who is ushering in a new kind of kingdom.

Jesus’ kingship is unlike any we have ever seen. Instead of exerting power over his people, he submitted himself to their power—even if it meant letting them put him to death. And because he refused the temptation to lord it over his people, God raised him up and established him as the one true King over all of creation.

And the kingdom Jesus rules? It’s a kingdom of converted hearts. It’s a kingdom of people who have renounced sin and violence and who are striving to live in peace and justice.

Of course, we’re not perfect. We still commit sins. We still resort to violence—even subtle forms of violence—to get our way. But rather than use the threat of external violence to force us to behave, Jesus our King treats us with kindness and unexpected, undeserved, scandalous mercy. He softens our hearts and asks us to love each other as he loves us—humbly, preferring each other to ourselves.

Jesus, King of the Universe, has come to overthrow sin through love, violence through peace, and injustice through mercy. This kingdom is not of this world. It’s far more glorious!

“Jesus, you are my King! Come reign in my heart.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading has a prophetic vision of Jesus' kingship. *As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a Son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship; all peoples, nations, and languages serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed.*
 - How would you describe how Jesus fulfilled this prophetic vision from the book of Daniel?
 - Why is Jesus not only king of "peoples, nations," but also of our families and our individual hearts and wills?
 - How would you describe the areas of your life where you often find yourself sitting on the throne of your heart and will, rather than Christ? What are some practical steps you can take to change this?
2. The Responsorial Psalm begins by speaking of the splendor and strength of the Lord, our king: *The LORD is king, in splendor robed; robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.* It continues with these words: *And he has made the world firm, not to be moved. Your throne stands firm from of old; from everlasting you are, O LORD. Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed; holiness befits your house, O LORD, for length of days.*
 - How would you describe the "splendor" and "strength" of the Lord?
 - In what ways are the Lord's decrees "worthy of trust"?
 - What are some ways you can increase your trust in Christ and open yourself more to his influence and power??
3. The second reading opens with these words: *Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father, to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.* It continues with these words regarding his second coming: *Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. All the peoples of the earth will lament him. Yes. Amen.* It ends with these powerful words of Jesus: *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."*
 - The reading tells us that Jesus "loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" shed on the cross, and that one day, Jesus our king "is coming amid the clouds." Why are these truths important to you?
 - What do the ending words of the reading mean to you?
 - What are some new ways you can share the great love of Jesus with your family, and with others, who need to come to know Christ and his great love for them?
4. In the Gospel, Pilate asks Jesus: *"Are you the King of the Jews?"* Jesus responds by saying: *"My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here."* He responds even further to Pilate's continued questioning with these words: *"You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."*
 - How would you describe Jesus' response to Pilate's question: "Are you the King of the Jews?"
 - Jesus said that he came to "to testify to the truth." How would you describe this truth for which Jesus came to testify? If someone were to ask you what this truth was, how would you answer him?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel Reading. It includes these words: *"No wonder Jesus said his kingdom was not of 'this world' (John 18:36)! He came as the 'Prince of Peace,' not a calculating dictator (Isaiah 9:5). This is what makes today's Feast of Christ the King so special. It's the celebration of a new kind of King, who is ushering in a new kind of kingdom. Jesus' kingship is unlike any we have ever seen. Instead of exerting power over his people, he submitted himself to their power—even if it meant letting them put him to death. . . Jesus, King of the Universe, has come to overthrow sin through love, violence through peace, and injustice through mercy."*
 - How would you describe the differences between Jesus, our king, and worldly kings?
 - How would you describe the differences between Jesus' kingdom and worldly kingdoms?
 - What impact has being a member of Jesus' kingdom, and accepting Jesus as your king, made in your life?
 - As King over all creation, and your king, what can you do to enthrone Jesus over your life in a deeper way?

Take some time now to pray and ask for the grace to give your life completely to Jesus as your Lord, Savior, and King. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Jesus, you are my King! Come reign in my heart."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]