

Pastor's letter

November 22, 2009

Dear parishioner,

We have arrived at the end of this Liturgical Year and we celebrate the Feast of Jesus Christ King of the Universe. This feast was introduced in 1925 by Pope Pius XI, at the end of the Jubilee that was celebrated that year. The denomination of Christ as King of the Universe was not a casual choice but willed in opposition to the atheistic spirit that was developing at that epoch in various countries.

On the use of this terminology, Christ, King of the Universe, the Church does not want to convey the concept that we as human beings may commonly intend king as sovereign of a Nation. It wants to go more deeply into its truer meaning, which is to consider Jesus Christ, King of our hearts, not of the Earth.

In today's Gospel the two protagonists are Jesus and Pilate. On one side, Pilate, as a government representative of a foreign legion, in the Roman Empire, he is someone who has the power to decide the fate of his subjects. On the other side, there is Jesus, who, when confronted by Pilate with the words. "*So you are the King.*" (John 18. 37) answers simply that His royalty does not belong to this world, that He belongs to a place where the human being can possibly enter only with his nobler side, his soul. Thus Jesus proclaims Himself King, but His royalty is in opposition to the human royalty. With His life, Jesus makes us understand what it means for Him to be King. The king is he who serves instead of being served. Willing to die for his people instead of being protected from them. Nor does He have soldiers to impose His will but shows us the strength of His love. In short, He is a King that all of us would want to have. Still, though we share the possibility of being His subjects, we are unable to consider Him as our King. The concept of king that Jesus tries to teach Pilate and us is very simple, yet somehow it is distant, thousands of miles from our way of life. I want to say that all of us can understand the benefits we can derive from Him, but in one way or another we distance ourselves from Him because we do not allow Him to enter completely into our hearts.

History shows us that no king has ever existed that has been fought against during his lifetime and in centuries after his death, as it happened and still happens today with Jesus. History continues to show us that over centuries

Jesus has been beloved or cursed in many ways, approved or rejected by others. Why then? Why bother with a king who does not consider His Kingdom of this world, a world in which we live? I believe that the answer to all of these questions can be found in the fact that Jesus is really the King of our hearts, though often, we do not consider Him as such. Try asking the totalitarian governments why they don't want Christ. They know very well that the only strength that can defeat them is the love of God that lives in every person.

The Kingdom of God is in our hearts, and we are called to look for His presence that lives within us in a "discreet" way, His presence does not impose itself with force but asks us to welcome Him. Here He is, here we find the real origin of this feast, inside of us. The royalty of God that lives in us doesn't need to use force. It is expressed with service, with the gift of ourselves, with love.

A question that comes spontaneously might be, " In practical terms, how can we realize that God's Kingdom is here on the Earth? Jesus, Himself gave us the answer when he said to Pilate: "*You say that I am the King. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.*" (John 18. 37) Here is where the Kingdom of God is formed, listening and living the truth of Jesus. Another question arises naturally, the same one that Pilate asked Jesus: "What is truth?" Truth is the revelation of the Love of the Father. To tell the truth is to say that God is Love. The truth is the life of Jesus lived with total donation to humanity. The truth is inside every one of us, and we can know it when we live in Love.

Peace, Father Luciano