

Christ the King (B)
(Daniel 7:13-14 / John 18:33-37)
21.11.2021
Unity & Peace

To Pilate's question, Jesus answered: "Mine is not a kingdom of this world."

What is the big difference between Jesus' kingdom and the kingdoms of this world? How can we really distinguish one from the other?

In the prayer over the offerings which will be said once the bread and the wine have been placed on the altar, we are given two essential characteristics of Jesus' kingdom: unity and peace.

Jesus' kingdom is made visible in our lives and in the Church, when there is unity and peace. Jesus' kingdom grows in the world when we sow seeds of unity and peace among all our brothers and sisters in humanity.

This may sound a bit obvious and yet it needs to be stated clearly that Christ the King is not a North Korean dictator. The unity which reigns in his kingdom and which he longs to see established in our hearts, in our communities and in the whole world has nothing to do with a kingdom wherein uniformity or conformity are imposed by force. Christ is king of a kingdom which is supposed to reflect the life of the Trinity, a communion of three Persons. Faithful to its Trinitarian foundations, Christ's kingdom of unity will respect differences and deal properly with disagreements, it will not brush questions under the carpets but face up to them, and journey with them towards a peaceful and respectful resolution.

If the Trinity is the model for our unity, then Christ himself is our peace (cf. Eph 2:14). For us to be established in peace, we have to be rooted in Christ. Because Jesus assumed our human nature, it ensues that the Kingdom of God is a place where we are supposed to become truly human, fully alive. Christ is not king of a kingdom ruled by unjust laws; it is not a kingdom wherein we are enslaved and not respected in our dignity as human beings. On the contrary, Christ humbled himself (cf. Phil 2:7) in order to exalt us, and make us members of the royal family of God.

In the preface of our Eucharistic celebration, Christ's kingdom is described as "a kingdom – both – of justice and peace." Indeed we cannot find peace without justice. The kingdom of peace does not resemble an idyllic "disneylike" kingdom but a reality which grows insofar as we are peacemakers (cf. Mt 5:9), men and women who work for peace and justice for all people. This work requires that we give time and energy to humble listening, patient dialogue, serious analysis, prudent judgement and wholehearted commitment to the service of Christ who is particularly present in the poor, and the needy.

Christ's kingdom cannot be the fruit of violence, arbitrary exclusion, indifference and oppression. As Jesus declared in our Gospel reading: "My kingdom is not of this kind." When we are not respected because of our religion, the colour of our skin, our sexual orientation or gender, then we are no longer in Christ's "eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace."

We have to ask ourselves whether or not our decisions, our political affiliation, the way we live our lives in family and in Church bear fruits of unity and peace.

In the United Kingdom, can we really say that the decision to vote for Brexit and the way it has been dealt with since have produced unity and peace? Between our Churches, do we work and pray in earnest for greater communion and for the end of sectarianism in Northern Ireland? In the Catholic Church, how can we justify those supposedly Catholic

voices which sow seeds of polarisation in the Church, which speak antagonistic words against Pope Francis and refuse to walk the synodal path?

To celebrate Christ the King is a good thing, but if we behave in ways which prevent Christ's kingdom from growing in us and around us then we are not too far from the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. We have to remember that, according to Jesus “only one who does the will of my Father in heaven” will enter the kingdom of God (cf. Mt 7:21).

The Synod initiated in Rome and in many local Churches throughout the world is an act of obedience to God's will. The Church has the duty to be present in history as a peaceful community, she must want to embody as concretely as possible the peace and the unity she proclaims to the world. The Synod is an opportunity for us to walk the path of conversion and to allow the Kingdom of God to become more visible in and through the Church.

The kingship of Christ is not triumphalist and we do not enter into it by bribing him. Jesus clearly warned his disciples that it is to the little ones that the kingdom of God belongs (cf. Lk 18:16). You and I, all men and women who are poor and wounded are invited and welcomed into Christ's kingdom, so that therein we can experience the comfort of true unity and peace.

May our Eucharistic celebration renew us all in the desire to imitate the true King, our Lord Jesus Christ, who became a servant so that in our turn we might become servants of our brothers and sisters and co-workers in the building of his kingdom of unity and peace.