Meditations: Solemnity of Christ the King (Year A)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (Year A). The topics are: Jesus is the King of the Universe and of each of us; not being afraid of the Judgment; Christ identifies with his sheep.

- Jesus is the King of the Universe and of each of us
- Not being afraid of the Judgment
- Christ identifies with his sheep

THE SOLEMNITY of Christ the King marks the end of the liturgical year. The last few weeks, during which the Church has invited us to consider various important truths, lead us to the certainty that Jesus Christ is both the Lord of all of history and of our personal lives. "Almighty and ever-living God," we pray in the Collect, "whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise." Nothing that happens escapes his knowledge. None of our efforts or desires are lost because He governs everything.

"*Regnare Christum volumus*" ("we want Christ to reign"), was the episcopal motto chosen by Bl. Álvaro del Portillo. It is one of the

aspirations that St. Josemaría repeated from a very young age: "Christ should reign first and foremost in our soul. But how would we reply if he asked us: 'How do you go about letting me reign in you?' I would reply that I need lots of his grace. Only that way can my every heartbeat and breath, my least intense look, my most ordinary word, my most basic feeling be transformed into a hosanna to Christ my king."[1]

"Today Jesus asks us to allow him to become our king. A king who, with his word, his example and his life immolated on the cross saved us from death, and — this king — indicates the path to those who are lost, gives new light to our existence marred by doubt, by fear and by everyday trials. But we must not forget that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. He will give new meaning to our life — at times even put to

difficult tests through our mistakes and our sins — merely on the condition that we not follow the logics of the world and of its 'kings.'"[2]

IN TODAY'S Gospel, Jesus announces how the universal judgment will take place. Jesus Himself, seated on the throne of his glory, *will separate [the people] one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats* (*Mt* 25:32). It may surprise us to hear Jesus describe Himself as a merciful shepherd, rather than a fearsome judge, in the moment of judgment. He is even more interested in our salvation than we are. He is the shepherd who does everything possible to bring the sheep back to the flock when they stray. *I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,* we read in the first reading, *and I will*

make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed (*Ez* 34:15-16).

St. Josemaría reminded us that God "is not a tyrannical master or a rigid and implacable judge: he is our Father. He speaks to us about our lack of generosity, our sins, our mistakes; but he does so in order to free us from them, to promise us his friendship and his love. Awareness that God is our Father brings joy to our conversion: it tells us that we are returning to our Father's house."[3] Therefore, "The image of the Last Judgment is not primarily an image of terror, but an image of hope."[4]

When we only act out of fear — whether of possible punishment, of looking bad, or for other reasons — we do not give our actions their full meaning. What we do may be externally correct, but with a misguided motivation, we will find it

difficult to enjoy the good our actions bring to our lives. We will settle for trying to avoid negative consequences. That's why Jesus, presenting Himself as the shepherd-judge, calls us to await our final encounter with Him without fear. Indeed, it will be a joyful moment, because we will contemplate the Love that has given meaning to all our actions. "Does your soul not burn with the desire to make your Father God happy when he has to judge you?"[5]

JESUS PRAISES those who saw Him in need and came to his aid. When those righteous people ask when they did such a thing because they do not remember, Jesus assures them, *Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of these the least of these my brethren, you did it to me* (*Mt* 25:40). Similarly,

but referring to the opposite case, He tells those who failed to care for the weak: *Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me* (*Mt* 25:45). Christ not only presents Himself as a shepherd; He also identifies with the sheep of his flock. When we make any gesture of affection or rejection towards our brothers, especially the needy, it is as if it were directed to Him.

The Lord concludes his announcement of the Judgment by saying that those who ignored the needs of others *will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life* (*Mt* 25:46). Thus He affirms that "at the end of our life we will be judged on love, that is, on our concrete commitment to love and serve Jesus in our littlest and neediest brothers and sisters. That mendicant, that needy person who reaches out his hand is Jesus; that sick person whom I must visit is

Jesus; that inmate is Jesus, that hungry person is Jesus."[6] Christ shows his kingship through his presence in the weak and vulnerable. We ask our Lady to help us recognize her Son in the people around us, knowing that our desire to serve them is a way of loving the King of the Universe.

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[1] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By,* no. 181.

[2] Pope Francis, Angelus, 25-XI-2018.

[3] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By,* no. 64.

[4] Pope Benedict XVI, "Spe Salvi," no. 44.

[5] St. Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 746.

[6] Pope Francis, Angelus, 26-XI-2017.