

Meditations: Solemnity of Christ the King (Year B)

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the solemnity of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the liturgical year. The topics are: Jesus is the King of the Universe and of each of us; the apparent weakness of Christ's reign; true power is in service.

- Jesus is the King of the Universe and of each of us
- The apparent weakness of Christ's reign
- True power is in service

THE LITURGICAL year ends with the solemnity of Christ the King. The last few weeks, during which the Church has invited us to reflect on the last things, lead us to a certainty: Jesus Christ is the Lord of universal history and, at the same time, of each of our personal stories. *His dominion is everlasting and will not pass away, and His kingdom will never end (Dan 7:14).* Nothing that happens escapes his knowledge. None of our concerns or desires are lost, because He governs everything.

Blessed Álvaro del Portillo's episcopal motto was "*Regnare Christum volumus*" ("We want Christ to reign"). It is also one of the aspirations that Saint Josemaría repeated from his youth. "Christ should reign first and foremost in our soul," he said. "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]

DURING THE trial that led to the crucifixion, the Gospel describes Pilate's growing during his conversation with Christ. Jesus was not only an accused man displaying a dignity Pilate had never seen before; He also spoke kind words, full of gentleness, that penetrated deep into Pilate's soul. The brilliance of truth overwhelmed the governor, who was unsure of how to act. Christ Himself is the truth, and before his gaze, no heart is left unchanged.

The contrast in this scene is striking: on one side, the power of the Roman Empire, which dominated almost the entire known world, and on the other, the true Lord of the universe, seemingly powerless to defend Himself. The hands that had performed miracles like restoring sight to the blind and raising the dead, that had caressed the sick and

comforted the sorrowful, now seemed bound. These hands, capable of commanding legions of angels, had turned bread and wine into his own body and blood, yet now they remained tied.

It is an astonishing mystery: Christ does not defend Himself. His reign is one of self-giving, and only in this way does salvation begin. Jesus wants to "accomplish the Father's will to the end, and to establish his kingdom not by armed conflict, but by the apparent weakness of life-giving love. The kingdom of God is a kingdom utterly different from earthly kingdoms."^[3] This "apparent weakness" is what wins over our soul's freedom. The Lord's fragility that breathes life into the world and its people, drawing good from evil, and offering grace without imposing it.

EVERY CHRISTIAN is called to be Christ in the world. Contemplating Jesus' bound hands compels us to give ourselves as He did. His example teaches us to love unconditionally. People who give themselves up lay down their defenses, ceasing to fight for themselves; they learn to listen without imposing their will, to recognize the good in every person, to offer time and inner joy without expecting anything in return.

Seeing Pilate discover Christ's reign, we realize how little it matters to be proven right or to get our way. Even the good we do loses value if it isn't motivated by a sincere desire to serve, like Jesus in his Passion. "How I like that word: service!" Saint Josemaría said. "To serve my king and, through him, all those who have been redeemed by his blood. I really wish we Christians knew how to serve, for only by serving can we

know and love Christ and make him known and loved."^[4]

The Archangel Gabriel told Mary that her Son would reign forever. She believed this before bringing Him into the world. Later, not without perplexity, she would come to understand the kind of kingship Jesus would have. We ask our Mother to help us comprehend and imitate, with ever greater depth, the gentle reign of her Son.

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

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

^[3] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 25-XI-2012.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 182.

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