
A KINGDOM OF JUSTICE, LOVE AND PEACE



The feast of Christ, King of the Universe, brings the liturgical year to a close. This feast only goes back to 1925 with Pope Pius XI's desire to draw attention to the messianic reign of Jesus the Lord. By dying on the cross, Jesus drew all nations to himself into one Kingdom, to create one Family and one Body. The liturgical reform that came in the wake of Vatican Council II made of the feast a capping of the liturgical year. Therefore, it is good for us to ask where we stand in relation to this feast, and to Christ the King himself.

THE FAITH OF A CONDEMNED MAN

We probably need the faith of the "good thief", to discover the kingship of Jesus. How was it that a man condemned to death could discover Jesus' fundamental identity, while his companion could address only insult and blasphemy, to Jesus? There is something mysterious, in this... It is the gift of faith, the gift which allows us to go beyond one's first perception. Last August I visited the Madawaska Correctional Institution in the context of the World Youth Days, and there I witnessed such a faith in the eyes and acts of the inmates. By touching the wooden Cross they were professing their faith in the One who came to establish a kingdom of love, justice, and peace.

WHAT REIGN? WHAT KINGDOM?

The liturgy tells us that Jesus will hand over to the Father « a reign that has no limit and no end, a reign of life and truth, a reign of grace and holiness, a reign of justice, love, and peace. » To us who so often pray « thy Kingdom come », is there anything for us, behind these words? Jesus never gave us a definition of the Kingdom, but he talked about it in parables. Just read chapter thirteen of Saint Matthew's Gospel: you will read about the sower, the wheat and the weeds, the mustard seed, the leaven in the dough, the fishing net, and the precious pearls. Jesus affirmed that the Kingdom was already present in his person, and that it is already at work. Every facet of Jesus' ministry points to this event: his prayer, his mercy and compassion, his forgiveness, all these show us an infinitely merciful and loving God. It is this Kingdom which the Church has the mission of proclaiming and the task of collaborating in bringing it about.

AT THE HEART OF LIFE

This Kingdom does not come about only at our celebrations. Since the coming of Jesus and thanks to the Holy Spirit, it is at the heart of our lives that it is formed. Parents who are serious about their children's welfare, workers who expend their energies in the mill or the construction site, or in community service, these are all Kingdom sites! School teachers, the sick who are challenged in health, the aged who exude hope and tenderness, these are Kingdom makers, too. All the people who help make the world better, all who promote truth and justice, these are builders of the Kingdom, too.

REREADING OUR HISTORY

The feast of Christ the King is a wonderful occasion to look back on our personal history. Who knows but that you might hear the Lord tell you: «You are close to the Kingdom, you who are engaged in the social or economic life, in peace projects and the promotion of life. You who struggle for the survival of refugees, you who give countless hours in volunteerism for a better, more beautiful, world where truth and justice prevail, you make this Kingdom more and more visible.»

FROM COMMITMENT TO FAITH

Every baptised person knows about the path to take. Very often, it is because of one's faith in Christ that someone commits oneself to service to the community, whether it be in religious education, liturgy, at the level of international solidarity, or in community service. However, in other situations, the Lord is there, urging us to look at political, social, cultural and economic situations in the light of his Gospel message. He who did not come to be served but to serve can still surprise us as he did his first listeners. «Every time you did it to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me. I was hungry and thirsty and sick, and a stranger... and you came to me...» Thanks to revelations such as these, life takes on an entirely new colouration. In the Diocese of Edmundston, at the heart of family life, at the centre of municipal activity and of business, and at the heart of our schools, the Kingdom develops and grows.

LIFE AND KINGDOM

Father Armand Chouinard, founder of the Alpec liturgical movement, has a beautiful song inspired by the writings of Saint John Eudes: «Life and kingdom of Jesus throughout the ages, living faith has remained as Spirit to the world. In our loves, our struggles, profound mystery which the heart of God gives our hearts their rhythm. Breath of life. A people shaped near the forest, along the river, God sustains us, directs us, and beckons us. Let us not miss our appointment with his word, God gave it, He recreates us, He works wonders. Life and Kingdom of Jesus, our inheritance; more than a project: our future, joy to the world.»

GIFTS TO THE DIOCESE

May the gifts you make to your diocesan Church in your great generosity, contribute to the growth of the Kingdom of Jesus, of which it is a daily sign. The Church is God's gift to humankind. It is second to the Kingdom, of course, and at the service of the Kingdom. Still, according to the will of God Himself, it is a sacrament of the Kingdom, a sign of its presence among us. The Kingdom is the final end of the Church's pastoral and missionary activity, a Church which acknowledges and serves a God working mysteriously in every human heart.

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (411) (21 November 2001)