



SUNDAY REFLECTION

The dominant theme of today's readings is that of the universality of Jesus' kingship, royalty or reign. The First Reading presents David as the anointed king of Israel; the Gospel makes it abundantly clear that Jesus was not such a political leader. In fact, Luke depicts Jesus not so much as a royal Messiah as the Prophet Messiah, anointed to bring good news to the poor' (Lk. 4:18-19), which is precisely what He does in today's Gospel, in His words to the repentant criminal. In the Second Reading Paul, evoking Genesis 1:26, proclaims that God's beloved Son is

the image of the invisible God who reigns supremely and uniquely throughout the universe. Created in, through and for Him, the universe, belongs totally to Him.

The image of the church as the body of Christ, He being the head, develops and completes the witness theme of last Sunday's Gospel. Here the disciples are not only those to whom Jesus will give eloquence and wisdom, they are members of His body, enlivened by His life, directed by Him, accountable to Him. If last Sunday's readings highlighted the beginning of the end of humanity and creation, today we are invited to reflect on the end of that beginning: the fulfilment of everything in, through and for God's Son. Jesus presently continues to accomplish this work in and through the church. As Teresa of Avila put it, Christ no has no hands but ours, no feet, no tongue but ours.

This commission entails respecting, caring for and developing the world in which we live, striving to make it the 'Paradise' promised to the repentant criminal. The garden nuance of 'Paradise' is particularly poignant in this regard, evoking the Garden of Eden. Far from taking Christians out of this world, Paul's view of salvation drives them into it, making them responsible for the universe in all its dimensions, including conservation of our earthly environment and planetary exploration. We might well ask ourselves: how precisely does God bring the universe to perfection in and through Christ? An answer to this question lies in the love which the Father and His beloved Son have revealed to the world through Jesus' self-giving death on the cross. This love is the attitude service concern, mercy and compassion for the other, an attitude expressed in actions which creates an environment, an atmosphere of peace and security, such as is manifested in Jesus' words to the repentant criminal and is typical of Luke whom Dante called the 'scribe of the mercy of Christ'

STEWARDSHIP: Today we celebrate Christ the King and are reminded that all was created through Him and for Him. Does my stewardship of the blessings entrusted to me give evidence that Christ is Lord of my life?

T. W. Manson

"The core of all that Jesus teaches about the Kingdom is the immediate apprehension and acceptance of God as King in his own life."

READINGS FOR FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

1 DEC '19

Is. 2:1-5: The hope that the people of Israel cherished in Isaiah's time was (as so often in history) a hope centered on peace and concord.

Rom. 13:11-14: Paul issues a wake-up call to the Christians in Rome: disciples must live honorably. The time for whatever is symbolized by the word 'darkness' is over.

Mt. 24:37-44: Jesus invites His followers to be prepared for His return at the end of time in the great event of completing God's work of salvation.

St. Augustine of Hippo

"Time is a three-fold present: the present as we experience it, the past as a present memory and the future as a present expectation."

COMMENTARY ON THE PROPER PRAYERS OF ADVENT FROM THE ROMAN MISSAL

My usual practice has been to present the readings for the following Sunday as an aid in our preparing ourselves for participating in the Mass. During this Advent season I will also be providing a commentary from the USCCB on the proper prayers that we use (pray together) each of the four Sundays as an aid in a deeper understanding of the words we speak and how we possibly participate in the Mass celebrated.

First Sunday of Advent

Collect

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at His coming,
so that, gathered at His right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

COMMENTARY

The increasing activity of the faithful comes to the fore in this translation, revealing the richness of the Latin prayer that dates to 7th century Rome and Gaul.

- The prayer begins with the gift of almighty God, but the way in which God gives is part of the gift. The Almighty elicits our cooperation in our own transformation.
- At the beginning of the prayer we are described as Gods faithful. We affirm that we are praying.
- Then the prayer offers a poetic reflection on our Christian lives. our journey through life is described as running forth to meet Christ.
- Along the way we accomplish righteous deeds by the grace of God. Even as we are on the way to this encounter, Christ is coming to meet us. Not only does this prayer describe our lifelong journey, but it also describes our journey this Sunday to come to the church building where Christ encounters us in His body the living Church, in the word proclaimed, in the ministers, and especially in the communion we share.
- We are gathered at Christ's right hand every time we journey to this encounter with Christ who comes to us not only in the liturgy but also in the least of our brothers and sisters. Our humble service of others in their need provides the righteous needs that accompany us to His coming. Then we process again, bringing our financial offerings so that with these the Church might continue its good works in society.
- The Almighty elicits our cooperation in our own transformation so that by the gift of God we are deemed worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom. The Almighty elicits our cooperation in our own transformation so that by the gift of God we are deemed worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.

Prayer over the Offerings

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below,
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMENTARY

- Life with the Lord involves an ongoing, reciprocal exchange of gifts. This exchange occurs on two levels in this prayer, on the level of things given and of persons giving themselves. This prayer appears only once in the history of the liturgy, in a sixth century compilation of individual mass booklets developed in Rome, until the prayer was discovered and included in the 1970 Latin edition of the Roman Missal.
- When the gifts of bread and wine and financial contributions are brought forward, the bread and wine are prepared and placed on the altar and this prayer is said over them.
- The initial divine gift begins the exchange. The Lord gives life to all things and with human cultivation brings forth the grain and the grape from the earth. By the work of human labor we produce from the fruit of the earth the bread and wine offered at Mass as well as food offered to the hungry in their need. The financial contributions offered may also be seen as human collaboration with the divine gifts, whether natural or human resources.
- From these gifts that the Lord has given bounteously to us, we offer a portion in thanksgiving to share in communion and share with our neighbor in their need. We ask the Lord to accept these gifts.
- The second level of exchange occurs in this prayer when the Lord grants us to celebrate the liturgy devoutly and, by implication, to live life from the liturgy we celebrate. Our collaboration with God by responding to the divine gift is what gains for us eternal redemption. Rather than a simple reward given after death, eternal redemption in this prayer characterizes our way of living from the Eucharist we are given to celebrate.

Prayer after Communion

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMENTARY

- The prayer after communion looks back to offer a reflection on the communion we have just shared, and it looks forward to tell us how to conduct our daily lives in light of the Eucharist we have just celebrated.

- This prayer was newly composed for the 1970 Latin edition of the *Roman Missal* and is based on two 6th century Roman prayers that were subsequently lost to the liturgical tradition.
- This prayer turns to the language of commercial exchange to indicate that in commerce with our Lord we derive the profit. Simple participation in the mysteries, however, does not bring about automatic profit. Participation needs personal reflection, which, accompanied with the ongoing gift of our Lord, is profitable to us.
- As we prepare to return to our daily lives, our journey is described as a walk among passing things. Even passing things, however, are useful for divine instruction by which we learn to distinguish between the passing things and what endures. Once we have learned to distinguish between them, we learn to love the things of heaven and to hold fast to what endures.
- The prayer does not say that we reject passing things nor does it describe things of this world in a negative light. Rather, the Eucharistic bread and wine we share, these are the enduring things of heaven, the body and blood of Christ. By sharing our daily bread in communion we learn as a community to value, hold fast and even to love the enduring things of heaven.
- The communion we share informs our daily conduct as we learn to value even passing things as bearers of the enduring things of heaven.

CHRIST THE KING:

Christ's lordship over the universe is commemorated in various ways in feasts of the liturgical year, including the Epiphany, Easter, and the Ascension. With the Solemnity of Christ the King, instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 in the context of the growing secularization of the world, the Church wishes to highlight even more clearly Christ's sovereignty over all creation, including human history.

Jesus' reign, as the liturgy of the Mass underlines, is a *regnum veritatis et vitae; regnum sanctitatis et gratiae; regnum justitiae, amoris et pacis*. (Roman Missal, Preface for the feast of Christ the King) Truth, life, holiness, grace, justice, love and peace: these are the values that the human heart most longs for, and we Christians can contribute to bringing them about. We can do so especially through works of mercy done for the most needy, as the gospel for this feast year A reminds us *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome*. (Mt. 25:35)

Nevertheless, Jesus Himself warned us, My Kingdom is not of this world. (Jn. 18:36) His sovereignty will be seen in its fullness at His second coming in glory, *when there will be new heavens and a new earth, and all creatures, free from the slavery of sin, will serve and never cease to praise Him*. (Roman Missal, Mass of Christ the King, Collect) now is the time of expectation, of working for His kingdom, confident that the final victory will be His.

Jesus is the center of history: not only the history of mankind as a whole, but also of each individual person. Even when it seems that everything is lost, it is always possible to appeal to our Lord like the good thief, as the gospel for Year C tells. (Lk. 23:35-43) What peace comes from the fact that, in spite of our past, with sincere repentance we can always enter the Kingdom of God. "today we can think about our own story, the path of our life. Each one of us has our history; we each have our mistakes, our sins, our happy moments and our sad ones. On

a day such as this we do well to think about our own history, and to look at Jesus, and to say often, but from the heart, in silence, each one of us: 'Remember me, Lord, now that you are in your Kingdom. Jesus, remember me, because I want to be good, I want to be good, but I don't have the strength, I just can't. I'm a sinner, a sinner. But remember, Jesus. You can remember me because you're in the center, you're right there, in your kingdom.'" (Pope Francis, Homily, 24 November 2013)

ADVENT: Advent can come as a surprise to us sometimes, beginning right after the busy Thanksgiving holiday with family and friends. It's not unlike the surprise of Mary when she received news that she was pregnant with Jesus. Like her, we are challenged to take the season of Advent as a time for pause, reflection, and preparation for the gift of God's love coming to us through the baby Jesus. I wonder though; the hype for the retail aspects of Christmas start earlier each year, often predating Halloween. Some stores are already having their sales. And of course others are attempting to beat out the competition by having "Black Friday" sales before Black Friday. Where did that term originate and why? The short of it is that the weeks leading up to Christmas are filled with holiday songs, seasonal sales, decorations, lights, and sometimes Advent wreaths and candles. Why? So we tend to lose the awareness of Advent and what this brief Season is about? What is it that we're celebrating? What is Advent?

Each year the Catholic Church gives us an incredible opportunity for a powerful encounter with Jesus. In her genius, the Church invites us during Advent to take a step back and look at who we are, what we are doing, and where Jesus fits into our lives. Jesus came into this world at that first Christmas for you, to bring meaning and deep satisfaction into your life, to fill you with lasting joy, and ultimately to bring you to eternal happiness with Him in heaven.

In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the season, let us strive to keep Advent a season of waiting and longing, of conversion and hope, meditating often on the incredible love and humility of our God in taking on flesh of the Virgin Mary. In our shopping and baking, let us remember to purchase and prepare something for the poor. When we clean our homes, let us distribute some of our possessions to those who lack many necessities. While we are decking the halls of our homes, let us not forget to prepare a peaceful place in our hearts wherein our Savior may come to dwell.

Focus on the Liturgy

I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.

There are always four Sundays in Advent, though not necessarily four full weeks. The liturgical color of the season is violet or purple, except on the Third Sunday of Advent, called *Gaudete* or Rejoice Sunday, when optional rose vestments may be worn. The Gloria is not recited during Advent liturgies, but the Alleluia is retained.

The prophecies of Isaiah are read often during the Advent season, but all of the readings of Advent focus on the key figures of the Old and New Testaments who were prepared and chosen by God to make the Incarnation possible: the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, Sts. Elizabeth and Zechariah. The expectancy heightens from December 17 to December 24 when the Liturgy resounds with the seven magnificent Messianic titles of the O Antiphons.

The Advent season also has a Marian and pro-life focus. We meditate on this wonderful mystery of the Word Made Flesh with as much eagerness as his Mother, Mary prepared and awaited the birth of her son. In the USA we celebrate the special feasts of the Immaculate Conception, the patroness of the United States of America, on December 8, and Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, on December 12. Other saints' days traditionally associated in with our preparation for Christmas include St. Nicholas, patron saint of children whose feast falls on December 6, and the saint of light, St. Lucy on December 13. Roughly four week, four Sunday's with an ongoing developing theme directing us towards the celebration of the great feast of the Incarnation. Are we attentive and ready?

PRAYERS



O Lord our God, You alone are the Most Holy King and Ruler of all nations.
We pray to You, Lord, in the great expectation of receiving from You, O Divine King, mercy,
peace, justice and all good things.
Protect, O Lord our King, our families and the land of our birth.
Guard us we pray Most Faithful One.
Protect us from our enemies and from Your Just Judgment.
Forgive us, O Sovereign King, our sins against you.
Jesus, You are a King of Mercy.
We have deserved Your Just Judgment
Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive us.
We trust in Your Great Mercy.
O most awe-inspiring King, we bow before You and pray;
May Your Reign, Your Kingdom, be recognized on earth.
Amen.

Act of Dedication of the Human Race to Jesus Christ the King

Most sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon us humbly prostrate before you.

We are yours, and yours we wish to be; but to be more surely united with you, behold each one of us freely consecrates himself today to your Most Sacred Heart.

Many indeed have never known you; many, too, despising your precepts, have rejected you. Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus, and draw them to your Sacred Heart.

Be King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken you, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned you; grant that they may quickly return to their Father's house, lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

Be King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions, or whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and the unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one Shepherd.

Grant, O Lord, to your Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm; give tranquility of order to all nations; make the earth resound from pole to pole with one cry:

Praise to the divine Heart that wrought our salvation; to it be glory and honor for ever. Amen.

Also known as "Iesu dulcissime, Redemptor"

LITURGICAL SCHEDULE FOR ADVENT

We will be returning to our usual schedule:

Weekday Masses

Monday – Friday Mass 6:30 a.m.

Confession 7:00 – 8:30 a.m.

Mass 8:30 a.m. (Beginning with Morning Prayer)

Thursday Evening Confession 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Mass 6:30 p.m. (Beginning with Evening Prayer)

Saturday Mass 8:30 a.m. (Beginning with Morning Prayer)

Confessions

As indicated between the morning Masses and before the Thursday evening Mass

Saturday Afternoon 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Teaching Mass Thursday 12 Dec beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Concert Monday 16 Dec. 7:00 p.m.

Obviously Weekend Masses remain the same

Vigil Mass 5:00 p.m., Sunday Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.