



Stained glass window in the Santos Passos church in Guimaraes, Portugal, depicting Jesus accused before Pontius Pilate

Just as the feast of Christ the King is the climax of the Church's year, so the scene of Jesus' trial before Pilate can be understood, in some sense, as the climax of John's Gospel narrative.

The term "kingdom" has only appeared (twice) already in the Gospel according to John, during Jesus' nocturnal discussion with Nicodemus: there Jesus tells his visitor that unless a person is "born through water and the Spirit", they "cannot enter the kingdom of God". This theme returns in Jesus' final exchange before his crucifixion, during the trial before Pilate. Throughout the narrative, Jesus has been challenging people to decide about himself and the message he brings. The last person to be so confronted is the Roman governor, who dismisses Jesus' offer in the words which immediately follow today's reading, when he asks, "Truth? What is that?"

Jesus does not talk to Pilate about himself, but rather about the kingdom (or his kingship). It is not "of this world", but it is in the world in the community of disciples who have accepted Jesus and his teaching and ratified this publicly by being baptised. Jesus' explanation of his being a king is very like the example of the shepherd and the flock and "listening to his voice". His kingdom is one of authority rather than power. His exercising of this authority has been in making God known to the world and drawing all those who accept the truth into God's kingdom. It is when Jesus is lifted up on the cross, revealed as king and priest at the crucifixion, that he will draw all people to himself. ■

REFLECT

The feast of Christ the King was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI when nationalism was on the rise in Europe and societies were deeply marked by class divisions. True peace, he wrote, could only be found under the rule of Christ, the Universal King, the Prince of Peace.

The notion of kingship or queenship is a difficult one in this more democratic age. This can make our understanding of Christ as king problematic. Pilate got it right when he had a universal proclamation fastened to the cross of Jesus, which read "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews". But Jesus' throne is a cross; his crown, one of thorns.

Although Jesus' kingdom (or kingship) does not originate from this world, it is present in the world. This might cause some people to think that the kingdom and the Church are the same thing: missionary work is sometimes understood as "spreading the kingdom". However, the kingdom is greater than the Church: wherever the values put forward in the Bible, the word of God, are being put into practice, we could say that the kingdom is present. ■

LEARN

The feast of Christ the King was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925.

This was a time of rising nationalism in many countries in Europe.

Pius said that although war had ceased, peace had not been established; he hoped that this feast would promote people's allegiance to Christ as Universal King and Prince of Peace.

DO

Make the Sign of the Cross with holy water and renew your baptismal promises to live as best you can as a true member of the community of Jesus' disciples.

SAY

"This is our God, the Servant King: he calls us now to follow him." (Graham Kendrick)



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

How worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and divinity,
and wisdom and strength and honour.
To him belong glory and power for ever and
ever.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
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.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Daniel 7:13-14

A reading from the prophet Daniel.

I gazed into the visions of the night.
And I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven,
one like a son of man.
He came to the one of great age
and was led into his presence.
On him was conferred sovereignty,
glory and kingship,
and men of all peoples, nations and
languages became his servants.
His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty
which shall never pass away,
nor will his empire be destroyed.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 92

Response:

The Lord is king, with majesty enrobed.

- The Lord is king, with majesty enrobed;
the Lord has robed himself with might,
he has girded himself with power. (R.)
- The world you made firm, not to be
moved;
your throne has stood firm from of old.
From all eternity, O Lord, you are. (R.)

- Truly your decrees are to be trusted.
Holiness is fitting to your house,
O Lord, until the end of time. (R.)

SECOND READING Apocalypse 1:5-8

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the First-born from the dead, the Ruler of the kings of the earth. He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood, and made us a line of kings, priests to serve his God and Father; to him, then, be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen. It is he who is coming on the clouds; everyone will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the races of the earth will mourn over him. This is the truth. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega" says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Blessings on him who comes in the name of
the Lord!

Blessings on the coming kingdom of our
father David!

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 18:33-37

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

"Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked. Jesus replied, "Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?" Jesus replied, "Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind." "So you are a king then?" said Pilate. "It is you who say it" answered Jesus. "Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice
by which the human race is reconciled to you,
we humbly pray
that your Son himself may bestow on all
nations
the gifts of unity and peace.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord sits as King for ever.

The Lord will bless his people with peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the food of immortality,
we ask, O Lord,
that, glorying in obedience
to the commands of Christ, the King of the
universe,
we may live with him eternally in his
heavenly Kingdom.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Truly a faithful friend is the medicine of life.
Truly a faithful friend is a strong defence.
For what will not a genuine friend perform?
What pleasure will he not afford? What
benefit? What security? Though you should
name infinite treasures, none of them is
comparable to a genuine friend.

St John Chrysostom