

34th Sunday of O.T. – Year B – Christ The King – 11/24/2024 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

*Daniel 7:13-14; Ps. 93:1, 1-2, 5; Rev. 1:5-8; Jn. 18:33b-37*

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the first reading, prophet Daniel proclaims the vision of Christ, the Son of Man, receiving from the Father, total, universal and everlasting kingship, Lordship, over all people and nations.

Psalm 93, in its verses, which is also a prophecy, announces that the Lord is King, from of old and from everlasting to everlasting, forever.

In the second reading, the Book of Revelation, calls Jesus the “*ruler of the kings of the earth.*” He is the king of kings – ruler over all kings. The passage says that his kingdom is us! He has made us into his kingdom. His kingdom is not just abstract power but people, his spiritual family, children of our Father who is in heaven.

In the Gospel of St. John, Pontius Pilate who asks Jesus, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” Jesus does not look like a king. He has just been tortured, scourged, and crowned with thorns. Pilate is about to sentence him to be crucified. Jesus answers Pilate’s question by affirming that his kingdom is not of this world. He is Lord of the world. He is the king of all earthly rulers, including Pilate.

Jesus gave a stranger answer to Pilate’s question. Pilate asked, “*Then you are a king?*” and Jesus answered, “*You say I am a king.*” But Pilate did not say that Jesus was a king; Pilate asked Jesus whether he was a king? What’s going on here?

When Pilate had Jesus crucified, he had a sign made to go on the cross that said “*Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews.*” The Jews who asked Pilate to crucify Jesus complained, “*Do not write ‘The King of the Jews’, but that he said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’*” But Pilate refused to change the sign, saying, “*What I have written, I have written*” (Jn. 19:19-22). Why did Pilate say that? Because, I think, Pilate knew that Jesus really was a king. Pilate was not ignorant; though he was wicked and dishonest. He may have not known that Jesus was divine, but he did know that Jesus was innocent, yet he sinned against the truth he knew, against his own conscience. That’s why Jesus said to Pilate, “*You say I am a king. [In other words, your own conscience tells you that I am a true king, a spiritual king.] For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice*” (Jn. 18:37). Pilate deliberately sinned against the truth that he knew. He sneeringly and scornfully said, “*What is truth?*” (Jn. 18:38). In other words, “*Truth be damned.*” Pilate did not merely condemn Christ; he condemned truth. And that is a mortal sin. It kills soul. If not repented of, it prevents you and me from going to heaven.

Every Sunday, all around the world, Christians repeat their most basic creed, Pilate is mentioned by name as the one responsible for Jesus' murder: "*Crucified under Pontius Pilate.*"

As usual, Jesus was reversing the roles of questioner and answerer. Every time anyone asked Jesus a question to test him, Jesus always turned the situation around so that the questioner was being questioned, being challenged, being tested. God always does this. For instance, Job was prepared to ask God the greatest of all questions, why he allowed so much evil to happen to good people: Who was God, anyway? Wasn't he just? And when God showed up, he didn't answer Job's question but instead he asked Job a question: Who do you think you are? Did you design the universe and human life? I didn't see you there advising me when the angels sang together at the creation.

Whenever we asked God "*Who are you?*" God replies, "*Who are you? We have to answer that question every time we make a choice between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between light and darkness, between the True God and false gods, idols. All sins are idolatries. We all need to pray, in the words of the old hymn, "The dearest idol I have known, whate'er that idol be, help me to tear it from thy throne and worship only thee."*

That is our life's task, because God is real. There is only one God, and only God is God; nothing else is God. God is the king of all creation, the king of the universe, the king of every human person, and of every human life. Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the first and shortest of all Christian creeds. We find it stated twice in St. Paul's epistles, the three-word formula "Jesus is Lord."

If we really believe that and practice that in our lives, then the **kingdom of God** will come and **God's will** will be done on earth by us as it is in heaven by the angels. That is the ultimate meaning of our lives: to be honest, unlike Pilate; to love and seek and acknowledge and live the truth; to be sane, to live in reality; to live in the real world, to live out the ultimate fact that Jesus Christ is Lord.