

Christ the King

The feast that closes every liturgical year

But this year there is something special

Because it is also the closing of the Year of Faith

The time Pope Emeritus Benedict called for before his retirement

A year to deepen our faith life

To explore what it means to live in faith

Like the good thief in our Gospel

He saw something not with human eyes

But with the eyes of faith

Eyes that were blinded in so many others

The other thief on the cross

The Pharisees

Even the apostles as they fled from Jesus' side

There is something that is a challenge for Americans

That is living in a kingdom

We see it as a human enterprise

And we have seen the failure of this time and again in history

But God designed it this way in the first place

Just because sin has disfigured it

God still desires a kingdom

In fact salvation history itself points to this

In the beginning God created from nothing

His crown jewel --

Human beings

Made in His image and likeness

Like a worldly king stamping a coin with his image

God stamps our souls with His image

And he placed us over His garden

To rule his creation

To preserve it

To grow it throughout the world

But sin entered

And resulted in a failure in kingship

Turning the garden into a desert

Murder and jealousy

Rivalry, imperialism and egoism

Adam and Eve

Cain and Abel

Noah, Abraham, Isaac

Jacob, Samuel, David

All called by God

All failing in one way or another

False gods, corruption, power

Things that continue to plague mankind even today

All things allowed by God

For our salvation

As St Paul tells us

For in him all things were created

Visible and invisible

Thrones or dominions or principalities or powers (angels)

He is before all things

All things are held together in him

He is the head of the body

The Church

The beginning

The firstborn from the dead

Through him to reconcile all things for him

Making peace by the blood of the cross

Whether those on earth

Or those in heaven

We need faith to see these things

It is easy to see where the disciples failed

To see where the Pharisees failed

To see where the bad thief failed

They had witnessed or heard about things he had done

He has saved others

Now if he really is the King

Now that he himself is in trouble

Save yourself

Don't we sometimes fall into similar criticisms?

If you are God

Why?

Why this illness?

Why did I lose my job?

Why did my child die?

Why did you take my parents at such a young age?

Why did my marriage fail?

The list is endless

And we can turn bitter

Or we can follow the example of the good thief

Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom

His eyes of faith were opened

To believe that there is something beyond this world

Something beyond what our senses tell us

The good thief remained on the cross

He doesn't seek to have his sentence removed

He seeks forgiveness

He teaches us, like St Paul, to run the race

Do not draw back from trusting Christ

No matter what the darkness and travails of this world

Christ the King

A new kingdom

He doesn't impose his rule upon us

He invites us to cooperate in his rule

To fulfill his plan of salvation

The kingdom of God is here

It is not a specific physical location

We cannot enter its coordinates into our GPS

It is held within the hearts and souls of all believers

It is not a kingdom of castles and armies

It is a kingdom of compassion

Where lives and hearts have been healed

Where the image of God has been renewed and restored

It does not belong only to a specific time or era

It spans all creation

It is a kingdom that challenges worldly powers and assumptions

It is not a kingdom of the individual

It is not about a private faith

It is a community of believers

Invited to be a part of God's army

His arms, legs, feet, hands and voice

Where we are invited to participate in the kingship of our king

It is headquartered at the Holy sacrifice of the Massa

Where we enter into the heavenly liturgy

Receiving Christ's body and blood

Soul and divinity

Not so he can rule externally by force

But so he can rule from within, through love

Only God can take an old wooden cross

And make it the centerpiece of hope and grace

Where he reigns

Yesterday, today and always