

## **THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE.**

**21 NOVEMBER 2021**

**READINGS:** Daniel 7:13-14    Apocalypse 1:5-8    John 18:33-37

‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ asks Pilate. There follows an interrogation in which Pilate seeks to find out why Jesus has been handed over to him. Jesus acknowledges that his is a kingdom but not one Pilate would recognise for it is not like the Roman Empire; indeed Jesus explains that it not a kingdom of this world but of a different order altogether. ‘So you are a king then?’ asks Pilate who is seeking to dispose of a problem that he has no wish to deal with. Yes, I am a King says Jesus but my kingdom is not of this world; it is of a totally different order and he goes on to point out to Pilate that He was born for this and that he came into the world for this; to bear witness to the truth and that all who are on the side of truth listen to his voice. The Prophet Daniel reminds us that the sovereignty of Jesus is eternal and will never pass away and we recognise that it is to become real for us in the coming among us of Jesus in our humanity and in the dying and rising of Jesus in his passion, death and resurrection.

What is this Kingdom? It is Jesus himself. Standing before Pilate his very presence proclaims that he is the truth , echoing his words to the disciples at the Last Supper when he tells them that he is ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life no one can come to the Father except through me’ (Jn 14:6). This confrontation with Jesus must have shocked Pilate who sits in fine robes surrounded by the trappings of earthly power while Jesus stands before him alone, bedraggled and cuffed with ropes, a prisoner in simple clothes, who has already been condemned by the Jewish authorities. Yet this is ‘the image of the unseen God and the first-born of all creation for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth.’ (Col 1:15-16) and whose coming will establish ‘an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.’ (Preface from today’s Mass). For Jesus totally missing from this scene are the trappings of power and majesty for his throne will be the Cross, his crown will be of thorns and his grave will be that of another. However his glory will be seen in his resurrection from the dead. As the Book of the Apocalypse points out today, ‘He loves us

and has washed away our sins with his blood and made us a line of priests to serve his God and Father'. He is the Alpha and the Omega, (the beginning and the end), something which we recognise as we put these symbols on the Paschal Candle which symbolises the risen Lord and was blessed at the Easter Vigil when we celebrate the Resurrection of the Lord: the coming of the Kingdom in which we are called by the Lord to be Kingdom people.

How do we become Kingdom People? Quite simply by our Baptism. For in our Baptism the Lord comes alive in us; we are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Lord comes alive in us. We are truly a new creation sharing in the life of Jesus, the life of the Kingdom as Priest, Prophet and King, making real the presence of the Lord by the way we live our lives. There is a powerful contrast between the kingdoms of the earth and the kingdom of God. While the world pursues wealth, power, honour and pleasure, all of which in themselves are good but can become idols; for us the Kingdom of God is about sacrificial love, forgiveness, humility, justice and service, all of which draw their strength from the Lord who is truth. For as Jesus reminds Pilate he 'came into the world to bear witness to the truth and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.' The only territory that concerns Jesus is the human heart. The Kingdom established in the heart of all those who live a life of truth. God reigns there when one is true to self, true to others and true to God. This is eternal life which is not the icing on the cake of ordinary life, it is what it means to be fully alive.

We are to live out this truth, which is Jesus, like him as priest, prophet and king. By sharing in Christ's Priesthood by embodying God's love for humanity and humanity's love for God by the way we love others with God's own love. I love the words of St Oscar Romero who said 'How beautiful will be the day when all the baptised understand that their work, their job, is a priestly work, that just as I celebrate Mass at the altar, so each carpenter celebrates Mass at his work bench, and each metalworker, each professional, each doctor with the scalpel, the market woman at her stand, are performing a priestly office!'

As Prophets, we are called to speak Christ's words of truth and as Kings by living lives of loving service. At the heart of our mission as Kingdom people is the proclamation of Truth. For without truth there can be no justice and without justice there can be no peace. Sadly in our world today truth can be a

scarce commodity and it can be a lonely path to follow in the face of dishonesty, prevarication, disinformation and the pursuit of self-interest. Too often in public life those in authority, and we ourselves, are tempted to protect ourselves and our interests by denying the truth.

Today however we celebrate the Kingship of Christ and the gift that is ours by virtue of our Baptism into the life of the King, while we know our weakness we know that in him we are empowered to make present in our world him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is our King, may he reign in us. In our relationship with the world we are called to echo the words of St Thomas More, the Chancellor of England under King Henry the Eighth: I am the King's good servant but God's first.'

God bless you,

Fr Hugh.