

## Lectio Divina – Solemnity of Christ the King - Year B

### Contexts

#### John's Gospel

- **Structure of John's Gospel**

**1:1-18: Prologue** – An introduction to and summary of the career of the incarnate Word.

**1:19-12:50: Part One: The Book of Signs:** the Word reveals himself to the world and to his own, but they do not accept him.

**Chapter 6** – Jesus, the Bread of Life is right in the middle of The Book of Signs – a central text in more ways than one!

**13:1-20:31: Part Two: The Book of Glory:** To those who accept him, the Word shows his glory by returning to the Father in death, resurrection and ascension. Fully glorified, he communicates the Spirit of life.

**21:1-25: Epilogue:** Galilean resurrection appearances and second conclusion.

- It is the only Gospel to call Jesus "God".
- Purpose of Gospel is so that those who follow Jesus might have the kind of faith that would give them eternal life, namely, the faith that Jesus was God's only Son, possessing God's own life and had come into the world from above that people might be given that life (and thus be begotten by God) and become God's children. (Raymond Brown SS)

#### John 18:33-37 – things to notice

- An excerpt from John's Passion narrative (18:1-19:42) in the Book of Glory.
- A dialogue between Jesus and Pilate.
- As usual, Pilate misunderstands and fails to grasp the true meaning of what is being said – a favourite technique of John which enables him to put fuller explanations into the mouth of Jesus.
- Questions about kingship and kingdom. Is Pilate intrigued by Jesus, or is he looking for a reason to condemn him? If Jesus says he is a king, he is guilty of treason against Cesar – the King of the known world. Notice that Jesus does not immediately confirm that he is a king ("It is you who say it".)
- Contrast between kingship of Jesus (servant, washing feet, giving up life, love, compassion, kingdom not of this world) and kingship in ancient world (power, wealth, authority, domination, death, punishment, kingdom of this world)
- Specifically: "I came into the world to bear witness to the truth".
- The true identity of Jesus and the nature of his kingship is the central issue

The Liturgical Context – why does the church choose this passage to reflect on this Sunday?

On the final Sunday in the Church's Liturgical Year we always celebrate the Solemnity (highest in the order of feasts and celebrations in the liturgical calendar) of Christ the King.

The gospel chosen for Year B is meant to lead us in a meditation of the nature of Christ's kingship and the nature of his Kingdom.

The context is shaped by the first reading from the Prophet Daniel on the coming of 'one like a son of man' on whom is conferred kingship by God.

The Church looks forward to the day when the kingship of Christ will be finally and fully realised, BUT, what happens in the meantime?

The Solemnity is a celebration of our faith in Jesus as the ruler of our lives, the one to whom we owe allegiance and who will protect us (drawing on the old feudal ideas of the relationship between vassals and lords). But the reflection is more mature than just that – provoked by helping us to ask the question: what sort of King? What sort of Kingdom? Perhaps leading us to understand that it is a 'family-kingdom' we are being drawn into and it is a Saviour who is King.

## Reflection

The first reading speaks of the coming of one who will rule in the name of God in an eternal kingdom. The second reading from the Book of the Apocalypse speaks of Christ as the 'faithful witness' to God and 'ruler of the kings of the earth'.

Here is a king who loves his people and sheds his own blood to save them. The Gospel comes from the Passion of Jesus and his dialogue with Pilate about the nature of his kingship. Jesus says that his kingdom is 'not of this kind'. It is not a kingdom with the usual geographical and national boundaries. It is not a kingdom in the earthly sense where power and oppression reign, but a kingdom where justice, love, mercy, truth, service and peace reign.

If we want to meet the King we will need to look in the places where the kings of this world seldom go.

Whenever we act like Christ the Kingdom of God breaks into our world. Whenever we are moved by the Spirit to proclaim the truth, to respond to need, to work for justice, to transform and heal our society, the Kingdom of God breaks into human reality and the grace of God becomes clearly visible in our words and actions. May we be a people who always seek to bring the reign of God's goodness into our world.