

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

OUR LOVING LORD AND MASTER



SUNDAY READINGS:

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Psalms 122:1-5

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

CHRIST: OUR CRUCIFIED KING

Many of you may remember the beautiful book-play-film, *A Man for All Seasons*. It is filled with numerous profound insights appropriate for today's feast, Christ the King. The 1960s masterpiece was written by Robert Bolt. In explaining his choice of Thomas More for the drama, Bolt gave this rationale: "A man takes an

oath only when he wants to commit himself quite exceptionally to the statement, when he wants to make an identity between the truth of it and his own virtue; he offers *himself* as a guarantee." Bolt believes that "a clear sense of the self can *only* crystallize around something transcendental." Thus, More becomes "a Christian saint, as a hero of selfhood."

Profound Faith. One can validly assert that Thomas More, in his day, deeply understood that religious faith, personal convictions, freedom of conscience, and commitment to Christ's values in both personal and public life are all integral parts of claiming that Christ is truly one's King. More served as the Lord Chancellor of England (1529-1532), but resigned rather than sign an oath declaring Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon invalid. He was imprisoned in 1534 and beheaded on July 6, 1535. Significantly, his letters from prison in the Tower of London reveal a deep devotion to the suffering Christ. Indeed, for More, Christ was King, his suffering-crucified King.

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Saint Luke's Perspective. Today's Gospel from Saint Luke (23:35-43), chosen precisely for the Feast of Christ the King, portrays Jesus as a crucified king. Christ's kingship, in the Christian perspective, is linked with a "kingly" vision of being a humble and suffering servant, a vision that unites Thomas More and all individual Christians—you and I included!

Thomas More explains this radical self-awareness, faith and commitment to his daughter Margaret when she visits him in prison. "When a man takes an oath, Meg, he's holding his own self in his own hands. Like water. And if he opens his fingers then—he needn't hope to find himself again. Some men aren't capable of this, but I'd be loathe to think your father one of them."

Fitting Conclusion. The feast of Christ the King, coming at the end of the liturgical year, is a wonderful opportunity for reflection on the depth of our acceptance of Christ as our King, our Crucified King. Does he truly rule our lives, our thoughts, our public and private morality, our desires? Has his reign in our lives transformed our values and deepened our relationships? Thomas More gave his answer—with his life. Jesus had truly become his King! In deep faith, More could even say to his executioner: "Friend, be not afraid of your office. You send me to God."

Our Prayer. Whenever we Christians say the Our Father, we pray: *Your Kingdom come!* And, what kind of kingdom do we work, pray, and suffer for? As stated so beautifully in the Preface of today's Mass, we ask God to 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." O, crucified-risen Lord, may your kingdom come!

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - 2 Samuel 5:1-3: We read the Old Testament because it reveals to us how God prepared for Jesus Christ. When Saul died, David was anointed as the second king of Israel. His original capital was Hebron, about 19 miles south of Jerusalem. Since Jesus was from the family of David, he was considered of royal stock.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 122:1-5: The last line of the psalm verse refers to the “house of David.” Around 1000 BC David’s house was established in the capital city of Jerusalem. All the tribes of the Lord go up to Jerusalem “to give thanks to the name of the Lord.” Making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a cause of great joy for every faithful Jew.

Second Reading - Colossians 1:12-20: Today’s second reading fittingly comes from Paul’s “great letter on Christ” (Colossians). We read several of Paul’s classic statements on the pre-eminence of Christ over all created things, “visible and invisible.” In Christ, “everything continues in being.” He is the “head of the body, the Church.”

Gospel - Luke 23:35-43: Our Gospel today is the conclusion of the beautiful “Third Gospel,” that of Saint Luke. Luke is instructing the Gentiles that Jesus is the true divine Lord of all history. The Gospel shows that Jesus is King, enthroned on the cross. Jesus assures the “good thief” that together they will be in paradise, where Christ will reign as the everlasting king.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published [Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language](#) (Orbis Books) as well as [Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights](#) and [A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis](#) (Faith Alive Books).

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