



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. On this day, we recognize the invitation from Jesus to recognize subjectively what He is objectively. Or to put it in other words: Jesus, who is King of all of Creation by nature, invites us to allow Him to be king of our hearts, our lives.

The Gospel chosen for today might seem a bit odd to recognize Jesus as king, for it shows not His power and majesty, but His weakness and humility. Yet here is the mystery: Jesus is recognized as king by only one person in the story: St. Dismas, "the Good Thief". Everyone else – the Jewish rulers, the soldiers, and the other thief – do not see or accept His Kingship.

Let's reflect on this: The rulers "sneered" at Jesus, the soldiers "jeered", and the other criminal "reviled" Jesus. Each of these groups tell Jesus to save Himself. But that's not the mission of the Christ. He is not there to save Himself, but us. I can feel in my heart the utter anguish of His Heart at this rejection. The anguish is not from the hurt we get when we are rejected, but because in His infinite love for us, He knows that rejection of Him means rejection of Life for us. He is in anguish over our destruction! For when we reject Him, reject His mission to save us.

While not mentioned in the Gospel today, just before today's passage, Luke says: "**The people stood by and watched**" (Luke 23:35a). It seems they are indifferent to this matter. They may be watching with some morbid curiosity. But they neither proclaim Him as king nor revile Him. But not making a choice is making a choice. We cannot get by simply by saying, "I never mocked Jesus." Rather, there must be a positive choice *for* Him! In the book of Revelation, Jesus says to the Church of Laodicea: "**I know your works; I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth**" (Revelation 3: 15-16). We cannot remain lukewarm if we are to receive His mission of salvation – we *must* choose.

To none of these did Jesus speak from the Cross – not the people, nor the rulers, nor the soldiers, nor to the criminal. It was only to Dismas that He spoke. Dismas defended Jesus; he recognized His Kingship: "**Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom**" (Luke 23:42). Jesus' response is the promise of eternity, not in some distant future, but today: "**Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise**" (Luke 23:43).

Oh! How that must have consoled the Heart of Jesus! Even in the midst of the darkness and rejection, there is one who will cling to the Lord, one who will accept His Kingship, one who will accept His saving mission, one who will be with Him forever in Heaven.

Jesus invites us to this as well – to console His Heart. There are times when we can't see Jesus' royal dignity. There are times in our lives when we are surrounded by darkness, sin and evil, and it seems that God is impotent. Yet even in those moments – especially in those moments – we are called to recognize His Kingship, His omnipotence, His power, love and glory. It can be a simple cry of the heart to Him, "Jesus, I trust in You," when all things seem hopeless. In this choice to look to the Lord and make Him King in our lives, we console His aching Heart – which loves so much and is so little loved – and we secure a place in Paradise.