

Homily: Christ the King: 34th Sunday: Cycle C: 2022: 2 Sm 5: 1-3; Ps. 122: Col 1: 12-20;
Lk 23: 35-43

“Jesus's Universal Kingship, the 3 Crosses, and Our Response”

1. **Jesus is the only King who began His reign on the throne of death, namely, the Cross.** Pretty amazing - not the way we would have done it! The Lord Jesus did not merit his Cross and death, which is the fruit of sin, but He voluntarily accepted it for our sake. He took on our sufferings, even the ultimate suffering of death, in order to **redeem** everything and open once again the Gates of Heaven for the human race. As St. Paul today puts it so well, *“He made peace between us and God through the blood of His Cross.”* His Cross is **the** Redemptive Cross.
2. By contrast **the bad thief**, as he is traditionally called, fully merited, or brought about, his cross because of his evil deeds in life, but tragically drew no profit from it. His was **a lost cross**, without any purifying effect. He lashed out at Jesus on his cross instead of repenting of his sins, and embracing his cross in reparation. Sadly many people still draw no profit from the crosses of life, wherever they come from: either from God's Providential **permitting will** or from His **ordaining will**. As Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen once put it so well, *“there is nothing more tragic than wasted suffering.”* Why? We see the answer in the 3rd Cross.
3. **The good thief** certainly merited his cross. He was not hanging there because he had lived a most virtuous life. In fact, quite the opposite, as he points out to the bad thief as they are hanging on the Cross with Jesus, *“Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes...”* The cross he was hanging on was a punishment; yet, he was able to make it purifying and an act of reparation by uniting His contrite heart to Christ and His redemptive Cross: saying: *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* Do we do the same in our life? Are we more like the good thief or the bad thief? Do we complain about our sufferings (crosses) or offer them in union with Christ in reparation for our sins and the sins of others? The grace is there to do so, if we ask God for help with a humble heart. *“This day you will be with me in Paradise.”*

This is the big question of earthly life: *How do we deal with the crosses, or sufferings, of this life?* It all comes down to how much we have made Christ the King of our life: the more He reigns in our life, the more we unite our crosses with Him and bear holy spiritual fruit through the blood of His Cross, as St. Paul says. We need to ask ourselves today: IS JESUS TRULY THE KING OF MY LIFE? Is He truly reigning over **all aspects of my life? *My work life? My family life? My social life? My interior life: of imagination, heart, and intellect? My relationships? My body/purity/any addictions? My money? My hobbies and free time? **EVERYTHING!*** He must be the King of every aspect of our lives, if we want some day to reign with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom. **Today is the day to look at this reality:** *what part(s) of our life are we keeping Christ out of - if any?* And then to **repent (turn around spiritually)**, like the good thief, and allow Jesus to reign over that part too. He is waiting patiently with His merciful love, especially in the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** – take advantage of that gift while there is still time before it’s too late! And then the immediate blessing that kicks in is this: *the more we invite Christ to rule over every aspect of our life, the more interior peace and freedom we will have, the better we can deal with the challenges and discouragements of this life, and begin to taste the gift of Heavenly life, in that amazing inner peace and joy even now – which the world can’t give us.* Why? *Because our hearts were made for the Lord and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him* (see St. Augustine’s **Confessions**). Let us today, with St. Paul, “*Give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*” Jesus wants us someday to be in Paradise with Him like the Good Thief. But remember this will be only become a reality in the end - if we invite Christ to be the King of our life now! God bless you.**

Recommended reading:

Why the Cross? Fr. Edward Leen. Scepter Press. 2002.

The Cross of Jesus. Fr. Louis Chardon, O.P. 2 Volumes. Herder Book Co., 1957.

The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus. Fr. Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange, O.P. 2 Volumes. Herder Book Co., 1947.