

Christ the King (C)

November 16, 2025

“Three groups on Good Friday”

The solemn feast of Christ the King has been called “the crown of the liturgical year.” At the heart of the readings this weekend is Christ the crucified King. Saint Luke presents an unusual picture of Jesus the King: He is hanging on a cross, where he seems to be conquered rather than be a conqueror; the cross is his throne; his crown is made of thorns; he has no scepter or luxurious clothing; he wears no shiny rings on his fingers; in fact, his hands are pierced with nails; he has no treasure, but *“is sold for thirty pieces of silver”* (Mt. 26:15). Christ the crucified king, died for you and I.

But he did not die alone. On Good Friday, we see three figures around our Lord. First, **the silent spectators**. The Gospel says “the people stood by, watching” (Lk. 23:35). No one says a word; no one draws close to Jesus. The people keep their distance, either afraid to get too involved or indifferent to the suffering Messiah. They are the same people who once pressed in on Jesus to be healed or taught.

There are lots of silent spectators out there, indifferent, or fearful. They are tempted to keep their distance from Our Lord’s kingship. They are not willing to exercise humble love, which unsettles and disturbs us. They prefer to remain at the periphery, to stand apart rather than draw near and allow the Lord to change them from within. Holy people, on the other hand, are active and involved. They are not afraid to have Jesus as their King, and are willing to follow him closely. They ask, “What does love ask of me? Where is love urging me to go?”

Then, there are **the hostile crowds**. They include the leaders of the people, the soldiers, and a criminal. They all mock Jesus. They provoke him in the same way, *“Save yourself”* (Lk. 23:35, 37, 39). This temptation is worse than that of the spectators. They are tempting Jesus to come down from the cross, just as the devil did at the beginning of Our Lord’s ministry. He does not defend himself. He does not try to convince them of his divine kingship. He continues instead to love without end. He forgives, certain that love will bear fruit.

There are all sorts of people in media and culture who are hostile to Jesus, to decency, to goodness, to absolutes. They express their hostility through scorn, mockery, slander, and insult. And we who stand up for Christ will bear the brunt of their attacks, knowing that in the end, God wins.

The devil always wants us to come down: come down from the cross, come down from decency, come down from goodness, come down from truth, come down and embrace me. That is his message. Will we follow?

The third figure is **the good thief**, named Dismas. He is closer to Jesus than anyone. At the end, this good thief “steals” heaven, if you will, with the humble request, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”* (23:42). Remember me. This is not just like remembering a person’s name or an important historical fact. To remember here means to include me, to involve me, to embrace me, to bring me into glory with you.

The good thief knew his errors, his sins, his troubles, his failures, and the score of injustices he committed. Fortunately, God “forgot” them if you will. Pope Francis told us, “God has no memory of sin, but only of us, each of us, who are his beloved children.”

On Friday, the Holy Father reminded the 16-thousand young people in Indianapolis and millions around the world that God does remember us. He cares for us and wants us to be part of his Mystical Body, the Church. He never closes the door of mercy and invites us to enter through the sacrament of Confession. We need to spend time building that relationship with God by opening our hearts to him and living as he intends, especially when we can’t see the future as he does.

The good thief “stole” paradise, and we can too, by surrendering to the suffering Savior. Will you surrender on the Journey of Faith? Mary is the pillar of faith, holding up our faith, especially when we are weak and in need of mercy, love, tenderness, and support.

She is our mother, the woman to whom we entrust ourselves. And if we submit to her Son, we will find what the good thief found, Paradise forever. God bless you.