

## **Some reflections on the readings for Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> November, the Feast of Christ the King**

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

*We come to the final Sunday of another Church year. The year that begins with the hope of the coming Christ ends with the proclamation and celebration of his universal sovereignty. We look towards the completion of God's new creation in Christ. We have heard the Christ story over the past twelve months. We are about to hear it once again. But is it just words? The whole point of our yearly celebration of the events of our salvation, is that we enter into them, that they will make an important difference to our lives. At the end of a Church year and the beginning of a new one, let us reaffirm our commitment to make the Christ story our own story, a story that enables us to see the world, the creation, the people with whom we share this planet, through his eyes.*

### **Daniel 7: 9 – 10 & 13 – 14**

This chapter forms the beginning of the long apocalyptic conclusion of the book of Daniel and consists of a series of visionary stories. They point to the deliverance of Israel from its persecutions and the ultimate triumph of the faithful. Here, God is called the 'Ancient of Days,' a familiar title in the poetry of the time. He sits in judgement and the books, the record of human behaviour and actions are open before him. The book or books are commonly referred to in apocalyptic literature (see Revelation 20: 12). We meet the 'Son of man,' a title best translated simply as 'the human one.' He represents the people of God as a whole as they emerge from suffering to triumph. Jesus used the title to refer to himself no less than fourteen times in the Gospel of Mark. It is an expression of ordinariness and humility, a sort of 'I am one of you.' But in Daniel the title is about a triumphant figure who will be given kingship over the world. We must not assume that Jesus ever meant this about himself in his lifetime, but the Easter experience, the Resurrection, the victory of Jesus over death, naturally gave the Gospel writers and first Christians a connection with the triumphant Son of man of the Daniel vision.

### **Psalm 93**

This is the first of a group of 'kingship psalms' (praising God as king of the universe). God's immense power and glory are contrasted with the weakness of the waters of chaos. The ancient Israelites believed that the world and the cosmos were like a vulnerable bubble in the midst of these waters but were protected from them by the Lord's supreme power.

### **Revelation 1: 4b – 8**

The water theme helps to explain the message of this passage. Water that breaks through a dam begins with just one trickle. Revelation celebrates Jesus as the firstborn from the dead, the first one to breach the 'dam' of death. His kingdom 'floods' all other kingdoms and power structures. It is God's very nature to be ruler of all that is including time and space. Any power that attempts to hold out against God and God's Christ must always, in due course, perish.

### **John 18: 33 – 37**

We have to read the Gospel of John from the standpoint that we already know who Jesus is, rather than assume that it is a 'ball-by-ball' commentary of events and words in the life of the historical Jesus. We are *reading back* from his position of risen glory. That becomes clear in this account of his trial before Pontius Pilate. John wants to show Jesus as almost running the show. The irony is striking. It is as if Pilate is on trial! Following this scene, the crown of thorns that the soldiers placed in mock homage on Jesus' head is to John a real coronation. As Jesus is presented to the hostile crowd, he is still wearing the purple robe of a king that they put upon him. His crucifixion will be his moment of glory! The light of resurrection victory is already shining on this awful event.

The encounter with Pilate reveals that the kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. It has no boundaries or power structures. Its citizens are those who listen to his voice. Pilate had the opportunity of listening to Jesus and so coming to know 'the truth' – about God, and God's ways of justice, love and peace, and what real power is. But Pilate did not get it. Do we get it!? We hear Jesus regularly through the words of scripture. He comes to us in the Eucharist and in so many situations in life. How well are we listening to him? How well are we living and acting according to his words?

A prayer for this Sunday:

*God our Father, when you wanted to show us that you are the master of all and the Lord of all people, you sent us Jesus your Son as the humble servant of your love, who lived for people, demonstrated your ways for the world, and showed your love supremely through his death on the cross. Give us enough faith to learn from him that to serve is to reign, and that to give our life to our brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings, is to find a joy and happiness that surpasses all others.*

*We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our King and Lord for ever. Amen.*

*Wishing you every blessing for Sunday and the coming week,*

*With my love and prayers,*

*John*