

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Solemnity of Christ the King—Year B

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe - B

Reading I

Daniel 7:13-14

As the visions during the night continued, I saw
one like a Son of man coming,
on the clouds of heaven;
when he reached the Ancient One
and was presented before him,
the one like a Son of man received dominion, glory, and kingship;
all peoples, nations, and languages serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not be taken away,
his kingship shall not be destroyed.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

R. (1a) **The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**
The LORD is king, in splendor robed;
robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.
R. **The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

And he has made the world firm,
not to be moved.
Your throne stands firm from of old;
from everlasting you are, O LORD.
R. **The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, for length of days.
R. **The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.**

Reading II

Revelation 1:5-8

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness,
the firstborn of the dead and ruler of the kings of the earth.
To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
who has made us into a kingdom, priests for his God and Father,
to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.
Behold, he is coming amid the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him.
All the peoples of the earth will lament him.
Yes. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, " says the Lord God,
"the one who is and who was and who is to come, the almighty."

Alleluia

Mark 11:9, 10

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come!
R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

John 18:33b-37

Pilate said to Jesus,
"Are you the King of the Jews?"
Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own
or have others told you about me?"
Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I?
Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me.
What have you done?"
Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world.
If my kingdom did belong to this world,
my attendants would be fighting
to keep me from being handed over to the Jews.
But as it is, my kingdom is not here."
So, Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?"
Jesus answered, "You say I am a king.
For this I was born and for this I came into the world,
to testify to the truth.
Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."
Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"

Exegesis

Daniel 7:13-14

The *Book of Daniel* was composed sometime during the persecution of the Jewish people by Antiochus IV Epiphanes that began in the year 167 B.C. The author is unknown. The book is named after a young Jewish man who was carried off to Babylon during the beginning of the Exile and who lived in Babylon until at least 536 B.C. The story of Daniel spans the years from 606 B.C. through 536 B.C., in the third year of Persian King Cyrus. The name *Daniel* consists of two Hebrew words *daniy* (to judge) and *el* (God). The name means either *my judge is God* or *God has judged*. Although there are other scriptural references to persons named Daniel, there is no proof that they are the character of this book.

Our pericope is taken from the 7th Chapter of *Daniel*, which is entitled *Vision of the Four Beasts*. The author is writing during the great persecution that began in the year 167 B.C. He is describing a dream that Daniel had in the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon which was in 556 B.C., 17 years prior to the end of the Exile. The four beasts represent the four successive pagan empires that dominated the region for the next 400 years, the Babylonians, the Medes, the Persians and the Greeks. The fourth and final beast, the Greek Empire, had 10 horns representing the 10 kings of the Seleucid Dynasty, and another little horn (see vs 8) represents the current king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. King Antiochus IV murdered the Jewish high priest Onias III in the year 170 (see 2 Mac 4:33-35). In 167 the Jerusalem Temple was ransacked and desecrated and the great persecution of the Jews began.

As the vision continued the beasts were brought before the throne of the Ancient One. Daniel watched as the arrogant words of the horn spoke to no avail and beasts were thrown into the fire and burnt up. (see vs 10). “The other beasts, which lost their dominion, were granted a prolongation of life for a time and a season.” (Dan 7:12). This sets the stage for verses 13 and 14.

As the visions during the night continued, I saw one like a Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. In contrast to the beasts, the worldly kingdoms and their leaders, that came up from the great abyss, the Son of Man comes from the heavenly realm. Jesus clearly reveals Himself as the *Son of Man*. After His arrest, as Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, the high priest asked Him: “Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One? Then Jesus answered, ‘I AM; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” (Mk 14:61-62). See also Mk 8:20, 8:38, 13:26; Lk 5:20; Mt 24:30; Rev 1:7, and Rev 14:14.

When He reached the Ancient One... The Ancient One is obviously God the Father. The Prophet Isaiah refers to God as Everlasting Father or Father-Forever. (see Is 9:5). In contrast to the rise and fall of nation states and earthly kingdoms, the permanence of God’s eternal and everlasting kingdom is being revealed in this vision. “His dominion is an everlasting dominion...”

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

Psalm 93 consists of 5 verses. It is entitled *God is a Mighty King*. The song celebrates Yahweh as the king of all of creation (vs 1-2), and as victor over the primordial chaos (vs 3-4), whose reign will never end (v 5). The Lord is robed in majesty. The beauty of God’s creation glorifies the Lord. The first verses celebrate God the Father, the mighty, all-powerful creator God.

The flood has raised up... God is more powerful than the roar of the raging waters. The great abyss, the primordial waters of creation were transformed by God into the beauty of creation. The great beasts that emerged from the abyss were tamed by the all-powerful Yahweh as proclaimed by the *Book of Daniel*. (first reading). Throughout sacred scripture, God’s power over the power of water has been a symbol of salvation. God is the Rock of my refuge in the storms of life. It was Jesus who walked on the water and calmed the sea. Jesus, the Son of God, is glorified in these verses.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

Holiness belongs to Your house, Lord, for all the length of days. It was the mighty *Ruah*, the mighty wind, the Holy Spirit that hovered over the waters of creation. It is the Holy Spirit that sanctifies and brings holiness to all things.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are glorified in this short psalm. The power and majesty of our Triune God is held up for us as King of the Universe. It is a universal and an eternal kingdom *for all the length of days.*

Revelation 1:5-8

The best evidence as to the date of composition of *The Book of Revelation* is from the testimony of Irenaeus who proclaimed that it was written during the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.). Most scholars date the writing 90-95 A.D. Although some modern scholars disagree with the authorship, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origin all attest to the beloved apostle John as the author, while he was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos. Although there was no lack of persecution of Christians before and after, there is no clear evidence of significant persecution in Asia during the reign of Domitian.¹ In a similar vein as the *Gospel of John*, *Revelation* envisions a great battle between good and evil, light and darkness, heavenly versus worldly realms.

John, to the seven Churches of Asia... The seven Churches is a symbolic number representing the whole Church of Asia or perhaps the whole universal Church. There were at least three other Churches in Asia listed in Paul's Letters, i.e. Troas, Colossae, and Hierapolis. Asia was a Roman province in modern day Turkey.

From Him who is, who was, and who is to come... This description of God parallels God's revelation of Himself to Moses in the burning bush; see Exod 3:14, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM He who is and who will be has sent me to you.'" In the second part of Exod 3:14, the phrase is shortened to יהוה *ehyeh*: "And thus you will say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM יהוה *ehyeh* sent me to you.'" I AM in Greek is *ego eimi*. Jesus will use this title many times to reveal His divine nature. Aquinas uses Exod 3:14 to describe God as *Being Itself*.

Witness... The underlying Greek word for *witness* is *martys*. Although its original meaning is precisely to *testify* or *witness*, the word evolved to describe the ultimate witness, the shedding of one's blood for the faith. Jesus is of course the *faithful witness*. He is the model witness against the Roman Empire and against the forces of evil.

The first born of the dead... St. Paul uses the term *first fruits of those who have fallen asleep* and tells us that the *first fruits* of Jesus is His resurrection, e.g. "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Cor 15:20).

And ruler of the kings of the earth... It is Christ and not Caesar who is *ruler of the kings of the earth*. "He (Christ) has a name written on His cloak and on His thigh, 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'" (Rev 19:16).

Verse 7 is echoed by the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:30: "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This verse brings together the vision of Dan 7:13 (our first reading today) and Zech 12:10. The connotation from Zech 12:10 is that people will mourn for what they have done to Jesus by their sins. "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and petition; and they shall look upon him whom they have thrust through, and they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and they shall grieve over him as one grieves over a firstborn." (Zech 12:10).

1. Harrington, Harrington; Sacra Pagina Series, Revelation; L.P.; Collegetown, MN; page 10.

Exegesis (Continued)

Revelation 1:5-8

“I AM (ego eimi) the alpha and the omega,” says the Lord God. This is one of four *I AM* statements in *Revelation*. Two are attributed to God (1:8, 21:6) and two to Jesus (1:17, 22:13). (See discussion above relative to *ego eimi*). John unites God and Jesus the Lamb throughout *Revelation*. The alpha and omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, represent the first and the last. “Thus says the Lord, Israel’s King and redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I AM the first and I AM the last; there is no God but Me.’” (Is 44:6).

The Almighty. Pantokrator in the original Greek. This is also translated *Lord of Hosts* from the Septuagint translation. John uses this title for God often. (See 4:8; 11:17; 15:13; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; and 21:22). *Pantokrator* means omnipotent, the one who has power over all, and is ruler over all. John uses this title exclusively for God the Father.

John 18:33b-37

The scene of our Gospel passage is Jesus before Pilate in the Praetorium. Jesus responds to Pilate, “My kingdom does not belong to this world.” The word for *kingdom* in the original Greek is *basileia*. The word *basileia* is used only one other time in the *Gospel of John*. It is used in the story of Nicodemus. “Jesus answered, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom (*basileia*) of God without being born of water and Spirit.’” (Jn 3:5). The Kingdom is a “place” where God reigns, a community, and those who are of God, of the truth, respond to the voice of Jesus and see and enter into that kingdom.² The *basileia* of Jesus may not be “of the world,” but this does not mean that it cannot be found “in the world.”³

Jesus answered, “You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.” The word that we translate as *testify* (sometimes translated *witness*) is *martyreo* in the original Greek. It is a form of the word *martys*. (Please see comments under *Revelation* exegesis above). The underlying Greek word that we translate as *truth* is *alethia*. The original word has a much deeper connotation than the English translation *truth*. Jesus once said, “I AM the Way, and the Truth and the Life.” (Jn 14:6). Now He is telling us that it was for this that He was born, to testify to the truth. In the use of the word in sacred scripture it carries connotations of steadfastness, faithfulness, trustworthiness, constancy, permanence, and ultimate reality. Belgium scripture scholar Ignace de la Potterie in his book *La Verite* describes *Alethia* in the *Gospel of John* as the revelation of God, which is the fundamental mission of Jesus, i.e., *for this I was born*, to make God known to the world. Therefore, Jesus is the Truth. He is not one truth among many; there is only one.

So, Pilate asks the right question, “What is truth?” The Truth was standing before him, and he did not recognize Him in the moment. The Truth of God’s love and mercy will be manifest to the world on the Cross.

2. Maloney, Harrington; Sacra Pagina Series, The Gospel of John; L.P.; Collegeville, MN; p. 494.

3. Ibid.; p. 498.

Reflection

This weekend we celebrate the great feast of Christ the King. The Gospel scene is Jesus standing before Pilate as He is about to face His passion and death. Pilate asks the question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus responds by saying, “My kingdom does not belong to this world... For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Then Pilate asks the question, “What is truth?”

That is the question. The problem is that we live in world where many believe that truth is relative to what they want it to be. We live in a world where people think that they can define truth, e.g. it is true if I believe that it is true. That is not truth!

In sacred scripture the Greek word that we translate as *truth* is a word that does not translate well into English. The Greek word means something more like *ultimate reality*. The underlying Hebrew word is a word that is used to speak of the steadfast unchanging love of God. This is the ultimate reality; that God is love, and that God is steadfast and immutable.

When I read our Gospel this week two other scripture passages immediately came to mind. The first is one of the great I AM statements of Jesus in John’s Gospel, “I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life.” The second passage that I was drawn to comes from the First Letter to Timothy, “God wills all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth.” (1 Tm 1:2) It would seem that salvation and knowledge of Truth are directly correlated.

There is only one Truth with a capital “T” and that is Jesus, the Christ. He is the personification of Truth. He is the ultimate reality of God’s immutable steadfast Love. He is the Word made Flesh, the unveiling of all of reality. He is the Alpha and the Omega. Through Him all things came into being and toward Him all of creation is being drawn. He is both and simultaneously the deepest longing of our hearts and the fulfillment of that longing.

Every human soul ultimately has a desire and an obligation to seek the Truth. God has given us the ability to discern reality and so we have no excuse for not doing so. God has unveiled that reality in and through Jesus. Our own salvation depends on our coming to the knowledge of Truth and living and remaining in that Truth.

St. John Paul II once said, “As the world turns the Cross remains constant.” As human beings made for eternity our souls are seeking the immutability and the immortality from which and for which we were created. The Good News is that “God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth.” (1 Tm 2:4). All we have to do is accept the gift and conform our will to that of God. Remember that as we pray the Lords Prayer together this weekend at Mass... “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

At this time every year as we come to the end of the Liturgical Year of the Church, the Church calls us to reflect on our readiness to meet Jesus at our death or at the Parousia, the second coming of Jesus, the end of the world as we know it. As the calendar year also nears the end the days grow shorter and the death of winter is setting in. It is a good time to stop and reflect on just how prepared we are for that inevitable moment in time when each one of us will stand before the Lord.

I remember as a child learning for the first time that the sun was a ball of burning gases that would one day burn out. No one told me the timeframe of that event and it caused me great consternation for a time until I had the nerve to ask my teacher about the time frame. The answer of several billion years gave me some consolation.

As soon as that fear left me, the Cuban Missile Crisis became front and center in the daily news. In addition to the regular fire drills at school we began to practice for the event of a global nuclear war. One of those exercises was to get under our desk and place our head between our knees. I had two basic problems with this exercise; one, I could not fit under my desk as I was an oversized kid, and two, I could not get my head between my knees as my belly was too big. I confided this dilemma to my grandfather one day and his response was, "Don't worry about it, the blast will probably vaporize you anyway." At the time I did not realize that he was trying to be funny. An alternative bomb drill that I liked much better was to walk in single file down to the local church basement which was the designated Fall-Out Shelter.

As a young person, episodes like this come and go and we quickly move on with day to day living and the eventuality of death or end times fades from our consciousness. As a priest I am with people all the time who are facing death. Now as I am getting older more and more of my friends and family are passing on. A dear friend of over 20 years was just diagnosed yesterday with terminal cancer with a prognosis of three weeks. Each day I become more and more conscious of my own mortality.

Jesus reminds us that we do not know the day or the hour. The message is to always live in right relationship with the Lord. Jesus does not want us to live in fear. He reminds us over and over to be not afraid. He wants us to live with the assurance of His love and mercy. He came to testify to the Truth, the reality that God's love is stronger than death. By rising from the dead, He conquered the power of death and shows us a world beyond the grave. He tells us that He has prepared a dwelling place for us, so that where He is we also may be. If we die with Him, we shall also live with Him. The goal is to die with Him. Amen.

F. Glenn