

## Christ the King, Year B

### GOSPEL

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‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ Pilate asked. Jesus replied, ‘Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?’ Jesus replied, ‘Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.’ ‘So you are a king then?’ said Pilate. ‘It is you who say it’ answered Jesus. ‘Yes, I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.’

(John 18:33–37)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Pontius Pilate was the prefect or governor of the Roman province of Judea. He held this office from AD 26 to 36. He had a reputation for being insensitive to Jewish religious practices and was all too ready to use brutal force to repress any dissent against Roman rule. He was ultimately removed from office and sent back to Rome after a brutal attack on a gathered crowd in Samaria.
- Pilate’s normal place of residence was in the coastal city of Caesarea. He was in Jerusalem at this time because the Passover was one of the ‘pilgrimage festivals’ of Judaism, when many people travelled to the city to celebrate the feast at the temple. The population of Jerusalem swelled greatly, and this was a time when the Romans feared an outbreak of rebellion. Because of this, the Roman legions travelled to Jerusalem to reinforce the troop numbers stationed in the city.
- There is some confusion over the powers that the Sanhedrin (ruling Jewish council) held. Some texts suggest they had the power to stone to death someone found guilty of blasphemy (Acts 6:12 and 7:54–58) or adultery (John 8:1–12). Why, then, was Jesus not treated in this way by the council and stoned to death? Why instead was he handed over to the Romans?
- The crime for which Jesus is tried and killed is that of sedition—any claim that he was the ‘King of the Jews’ was a direct threat to the emperor. Only the Roman governor could pass judgment in such a case. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, not a Jewish one.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

Many of the readings from Mark’s Gospel that we have encountered over past weeks focus on the misunderstanding the disciples have about the nature of the kingdom that Jesus proclaims. They remain locked into an earthly understanding of political power. In this text from John, Jesus makes very explicit that this is not the case. His kingdom is not of this world! Pilate pushes the point in order to trap him into an admission of guilt: ‘So you are a king then?’ Jesus’ kingship, however, is not to be bound by earthly understandings. He is indeed a king, but he exercises his kingship by making known the love of God. For this purpose alone he came into the world: to bear witness to the truth that ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only son’ (John 3:16). It is for the world and all humanity that Christ died, so we should avoid the mistake of thinking that Christ’s kingdom is in some way unreal or anchored in the clouds. While it is not of this world, it is most definitely anchored in this world. All Christians are challenged to help bring this kingdom to fulfillment here and now. ‘Thy kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.’ It is in the lives and hearts of ordinary people and the societies they build that Christ’s kingdom lives and awaits completion. We too must bear witness to this truth.

- What are some of the conflicts between the values of the kingdom of Jesus and the values of the society we live in?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- In what ways has Jesus become ‘king’ of your life?
- How are you progressing in your own search for truth?
- Today’s feast brings the Church year to a close. Review the year together. What have been the important moments for you in your personal life and on your journey? Who have been the important people for you this year? Have you noticed change and movement forward?
- This week, bear witness in your home or workplace to the truth that you are discovering.
- Use today’s psalm response this week:

*The Lord is King;  
he is robed in majesty.*

