



The Holy See

RITE OF CANONIZATION OF BLESSED:

- GIOVANNI ANTONIO FARINA
- KURIAKOSE ELIAS CHAVARA OF THE HOLY FAMILY
 - LUDOVICO OF CASORIA
 - NICOLA OF LONGOBARDI
- EUPHRASIA ELUVATHINGAL OF THE SACRED HEART
 - AMATO RONCONI

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 23 November 2014

[Multimedia]

Today's liturgy invites us to fix our gaze on Christ, the King of the Universe. The beautiful prayer of the Preface reminds us that his kingdom is "a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace". The readings we have listened to show us how Jesus established his kingdom; how he brings it about in history; and what he now asks of us.

First, *how Jesus brought about his kingdom*: he did so through his closeness and tenderness towards us. He is the Shepherd, of whom the Prophet Ezekiel spoke in the First Reading (cf. 34:11-12, 15-17). These verses are interwoven with verbs which show the care and love that the Shepherd has for his flock: to search, to look over, to gather the dispersed, to lead into pasture, to bring to rest, to seek the lost sheep, to lead back the confused, to bandage the wounded, to heal the sick, to take care of, to pasture. All of these are fulfilled in Jesus Christ: he is truly the "great Shepherd of the sheep and the protector of our souls" (cf. *Heb* 13:20; *1 Pt* 2:25).

Those of us who are called to be pastors in the Church cannot stray from this example, if we do

not want to become hirelings. In this regard the People of God have an unerring sense for recognizing good shepherds and in distinguishing them from hirelings.

After his victory, that is after his Resurrection, *how has Jesus advanced his kingdom?* The Apostle Paul, in the First Letter to the Corinthians, says: “for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (15:25). The Father, little by little, subjects all to the Son and, at the same time, the Son subjects all to the Father, including even himself in the end. Jesus is not a King according to earthly ways: for him, to reign is not to command, but to obey the Father, to give himself over to the Father, so that his plan of love and salvation may be brought to fulfilment. In this way there is full reciprocity between the Father and the Son. The period of Christ’s reign is the long period of subjecting everything to the Son and consigning everything to the Father. “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:26). And in the end, when all things will be under the sovereignty of Jesus, and everything, including Jesus himself, will be subjected to the Father, God will be all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

The Gospel teaches *what Jesus’ kingdom requires of us*: it reminds us that closeness and tenderness are the rule of life for us also, and that on this basis we will be judged. This is how we will be judged. This is the great parable of the final judgement in Matthew 25. The King says: “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (25:34-36). The righteous will ask him: when did we do all this? And he will answer them: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

The starting point of salvation is not the confession of the sovereignty of Christ, but rather the imitation of Jesus’ works of mercy through which he brought about his kingdom. The one who accomplishes these works shows that he has welcomed Christ’s sovereignty, because he has opened his heart to God’s charity. In the twilight of life we will be judged on our love for, closeness to and tenderness towards our brothers and sisters. Upon this will depend our entry into, or exclusion from, the kingdom of God: our belonging to the one side or the other. Through his victory, Jesus has opened to us his kingdom. But it is for us to enter into it, beginning with our life now – his kingdom begins now – by being close in concrete ways to our brothers and sisters who ask for bread, clothing, acceptance, solidarity, catechesis. If we truly love them, we will be willing to share with them what is most precious to us, Jesus himself and his Gospel.

Today the Church places before us the example of these new saints. Each in his or her own way served the kingdom of God, of which they became heirs, precisely through works of generous devotion to God and their brothers and sisters. They responded with extraordinary creativity to the commandment of love of God and neighbour. They dedicated themselves, without holding back, to serving the least and assisting the destitute, sick, elderly and pilgrims. Their preference for the

smallest and poorest was the reflection and measure of their unconditional love of God. In fact, they sought and discovered love in a strong and personal relationship with God, from whence springs forth true love for one's neighbour. In the hour of judgement, therefore, they heard that tender invitation: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (*Mt 25:34*).

Through the rite of canonization, we have confessed once again the mystery of God's kingdom and we have honoured Christ the King, the Shepherd full of love for his sheep. May our new saints, through their witness and intercession, increase within us the joy of walking in the way of the Gospel and our resolve to embrace the Gospel as the compass of our lives. Let us follow in their footsteps, imitating their faith and love, so that our hope too may be clothed in immortality. May we not allow ourselves to be distracted by other earthly and fleeting interests. And may Mary, our Mother and Queen of all Saints, guide us on the way to the kingdom of heaven.