

CHRIST THE KING — B

READING I – Dn 7:13-14

READING II – Rv 1:5-8

GOSPEL – Jn 18:33b-37

During the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, around 165 B.C., the author of Daniel reflected on the thoughts of pious Jews — men, women, and children — regarding their fate. Would the forces of evil have the upper hand, or would God's people finally triumph? In answer to this question, in Ch. 7, the author describes four beasts which refer respectively to the pagan empires of the neo-Babylonians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Greeks (see Dn 7:2-7). The "little horn" (Dn 7:8) is Antiochus IV Epiphanes himself.

At this point the author depicts a royal audience where God, the Ancient One, is surrounded by innumerable angels. At this royal court, the fourth beast is destroyed. Next, "the one in human likeness" (rather than "one like a son of man") is brought into God's presence. This "one in human likeness" is not a real individual but a symbol of the holy ones of the Most High (see Dn 7:18, 22, 27), just as the beasts are symbols of the four kingdoms. This is the faithful Israel. That is, men, women, and children who have kept the covenant with the Lord during the trying days of persecution. As a reward, they will be made kings and queens. They are the new creation, for they have accomplished God's purpose. In answer to the question raised above, the faithful of the Lord have triumphed and their victory is a regal one.

Like Dn 7-12, the book of Revelation, is an apocalyptic work. The author holds out a message of hope for his audience during a persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, probably in the last decade of the first Christian century.

Through his passion, Christ was the faithful witness. By the resurrection he became the firstborn of the dead and owing to his exaltation he is the ruler of the kings of the earth. This last point suggests hope for those being persecuted by a pagan king. A doxology follows. His love is everlasting. His liberation is at the price of his own blood. His ordaining of fellow priests is in view of service to God. As a way of awakening hope, the author refers to Dn 7:13 and its Christian rereading, namely, Christ's glorious return. Both the Jews who persecuted Jesus and all unbelieving nations will have occasion to lament this coming. Though God's

enemies now persecute his community, they will be overthrown finally, because God is the beginning and the end of history. He is the Almighty One.

In Jn 18:28-19:16a, kingship plays a dominant role. Involvement is also a key issue. Pilate does not want to get involved with God's Word. He wishes to avoid the task of judging and so he vacillates when Jesus questions him about the title "the King of the Jews." This in turn provokes the discussion of handing Jesus over. Jesus replies that his kingship is different. It is non-political and non-national. It is one of truth, that is, one concerned with the revelation of God's Word. Ironically, Jesus is on trial, yet he is the judge whose Word provokes a decision. Jesus thus provokes the vacillating Pilate to decide and take a stand on the side of truth. But Pilate is not committed to the truth and hence cannot hear God's voice.

Trusting God makes us royalty. According to Gn 1-3, humans are kings and queens. Yet we tend to look at our history of failure and conclude that we really cannot make any difference. We look at the omnipotence of our God and reason that we really cannot count for much. We look at our seemingly meager talents and feel that we have little to contribute. We thus fail to realize that our God trusts us and despite our failures continues to entrust to us the running of a peculiarly human world. Trusting God makes us royalty.

The author of Dn 7 links kingship/queenship with faithful response and trust. The men, women, and children are "the one in human likeness" who are brought into God's audience chamber. The author challenges them to respond in faith, to endure persecution, and to demonstrate the trust placed in them by God. As a reward for such fidelity, they receive an everlasting dominion and an indestructible kingship/queenship. For the author of Daniel, trusting God makes us royalty.

The author of John provokes a decision from the believer as he had Jesus provoke a decision from Pilate. Will the Christian be committed to God's revealing Word or will the Christian vacillate, put off a decision, and renounce the trust placed in him or her by God? Will the Christian show the same trust that Jesus showed in carrying out his kingship? For John, the believer can and does make a difference. As demonstrated in Jesus, trusting God us makes us royalty.

Parents who exercise authority lovingly yet realistically, demonstrate trust. The discouraged who resolve to make firmer efforts to put their lives together again

reveal trust. Sinners who rebound from their experience of infidelity to begin anew exhibit trust. The not-so-talented who none-the-less offer their gifts in the running of a better family, community, and world evince trust. All such people have resolved not to be dropouts from society. They have determined to take their kingship/queen-ship seriously. Their efforts imply that trusting God makes us royalty.

Eucharist presents the account of the death and resurrection as the account of trusting response by the king. Jesus endures the weakness of the passion and demonstrates his kingship by continuing to respond to the trust placed in him by the Father. Eucharist challenges the worshiping community to emulate Jesus' approach to royalty by their enduring commitment. Eucharist proclaims to such a community that trusting in God makes us royalty.