



GFORCE

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Year B

Daniel 7:13-14
Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5
Revelation 1:5-8
John 18:33b-37

Gathering

(An unlit candle, a crucifix or an icon of Christ the King enthroned on a pillow covered with a gold or purple cloth and some seasonal flowers are arranged on a table in the gathering place.)

This week we reflect on God's reign over all creation including our lives. Last week we talked about the end times and were invited to focus on hope in the nearness of God rather than on when or how the end times will come. How did you witness to hope in God during this past week?

Prayer

(Members are invited to gather themselves in God's presence in silence while a member lights the candle. Then after some quiet time the prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: The LORD is king, in splendor robed;
robed is the LORD and girt about with strength.

All: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

Leader: And he has made the world firm,
not to be moved.
Your throne stands firm from of old;
from everlasting you are, O LORD.

All: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

Leader: Your decrees are worthy of trust indeed;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, for length of days.

All: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty.

Psalm 93:1, 1-2, 5

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these two questions: "What draws you to this gospel?" "Where do you resist this gospel?" The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

Gravity is not the strongest force in the universe, but it is an influential force. It curves light and space. It holds and sustains the motion of planetary and stellar bodies in their orbital paths revolving around a common center. The gravity of planets is used with careful calculations to accelerate or decelerate space probes on their exploratory voyages through the solar system.

The reign of God is like gravity, but it is an even more influential force. It cannot be calculated by a mathematical formula, of course, but it provides a celestial momentum all its own. It shapes the universe as a cross by the pouring out of God's love in creation for redemption. It holds and sustains the laws of nature and the relationships they manifest in the physical world. It also holds and sustains the many paths of people and races in the multiplicity of our complex lives. At the reign's center, God continually renews the unfolding universe through the suffering and dying of Jesus and the rising and returning of Christ.

This is why Jesus says his kingdom does not belong to this world. His kingdom is not a land with borders occupied by a people of given customs and languages. It is not a nation to which we pledge allegiance, nor one protected by an army. The kingdom is an everlasting dominion. It is a constant that manifests in the world truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace to which we are called to give faithful witness.

As gravity keeps us connected to the earth, God's reign harmoniously connects us to one another in the tides of charity and justice. Like the gravity assistance to the voyage of a space probe, Christ's kingdom *pulls us away* from the attraction of this world which ultimately weighs us down. Simultaneously the kingdom *compels us toward* the attractions transcending the limitations of languages and race.

Jesus is not only the King of the Jews, but Christ, our Lord, is the king of the universe.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ Describe an attraction in this world that has weighed you down.
- ◆ What truth does his voice speak to you these days?
- ◆ Where do you see God's reign emerging in your family, parish, world?
- ◆ "Behold, he is coming amid the clouds." How does the cosmos speak of God to you?

HEARING THE GOSPEL'S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: "What do you hear Christ saying to

us in hearing and sharing his word?” “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Advent begins next Sunday. It is a season to prayerfully prepare for the coming of Christ, the King. Choose some deliberate practice that will help you over the next weeks to observe the secular winter holiday season with an Advent spirit rather than a pre-mature Christmas spirit. Then celebrate with a Christmas spirit for twelve days beginning on December 25.
- ◆ Set aside ten minutes a day each day this week for reflection and prayer. Try praying the Lord’s Prayer in the following way. In your mind and heart say the words of the prayer slowly to yourself. Then slowly repeat the words phrase by phrase, stopping for some moments after each phrase.
- ◆ Many people become depressed during this season of secular and religious holidays and the growing darkness in the northern hemisphere. Give witness to God’s reign by being a source of hope and light to someone who is ill, alone or going through some difficult patch in life.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What do you say to him in response?” The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

Following this sharing, members join in singing “Shout to the Lord.” Several versions may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete a member prays as follows on behalf of all.)

Member: Almighty and ever-living God,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of the universe,
grant, we pray,
that the whole creation, set free from slavery,
may render your majesty service
and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Roman Missal, Christ the King, Collect

(Members share a sign of peace.)

