

The holiday season is upon us again. Advent begins next Sunday—the start of a new liturgical year and, for many of us, a time when life becomes full and fast. As we decorate our homes, prepare our tables, and gather with family and friends, the Church invites us to remember something essential amid all the activity: Christ our King stands at the center of everything. All the light, all the joy, all the celebrations of these coming weeks trace back to Him. But what does His kingdom actually mean? What kind of King do we welcome in Advent, and what kind of kingdom do we prepare to receive?

When the angel Gabriel came to Mary at the Annunciation, he announced a promise so astonishing that it stood at the center of Israel's hope: *"You will conceive in your womb and bear a son... the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule... and of his kingdom there will be no end."* (Lk 1:31-33) From the very beginning of Luke's Gospel, Mary is told that the child within her is the long-awaited King—the Son of David, the fulfillment of the covenant, the one whose reign would bring peace and salvation to Israel and to the world. Mary receives this revelation in pure faith, and in the Magnificat she proclaims God's faithfulness to His covenant love: *"He has remembered His promise of mercy"* (Lk 1:54)

But there is a holy irony buried deep in her words. As Cardinal Schönborn observes, Mary's pregnancy begins with the hope of a King, a Prince of Peace long awaited by generations. Yet Luke's Gospel ends with a scene that looks

like the collapse of all those promises. The “throne” of this King becomes the cross. The “royal court” consists of two criminals, one on His right and one on His left. The “homage” offered to Him is mockery from passersby and sneers from religious leaders. And above His sacred head hangs a sign—meant as an insult but proclaiming the truth nonetheless: *“This is the King of the Jews.”***[1]**

From a worldly perspective, it looks like the dream of the Messiah’s kingdom has been shattered. But Luke wants us to see something else—something deeper, something truer. Jesus is revealing what the kingship of God really means. His kingdom is not built by domination or political triumph. His kingdom is mercy. His royal power is forgiveness. His victory is the reconciliation of sinners. He reigns not by taking life, but by giving His own.

And it is precisely here, at the moment when His kingship seems most hidden, that His kingdom breaks forth with the greatest clarity. One of the criminals crucified next to Jesus—the one tradition calls the “Good Thief”—utters a simple plea: *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* We hear an echo of Mary’s Magnificat as if it had become a prayer, *“Remember your promise of mercy.”* Those words open the door to one of the most profound revelations in Scripture. The man asks to be remembered, and Jesus replies, *“Today you will be with me in Paradise.”* His request becomes his entrance into the kingdom.

Luke is showing us that the kingship promised to Mary at the Annunciation is being fulfilled on the Cross. The kingdom is revealed not in worldly majesty but in divine compassion. And entry into that kingdom is granted not through merit or achievement, but through humble, trusting appeal to the mercy of Christ the King.

Paul speaks to us today in his letter to the Colossians, the Father “has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. “What is our inheritance? Not land. Not status. Not earthly blessings. Our inheritance is God Himself—a share in the divine life made possible through the mercy of Christ on the cross.

But this inheritance calls for a response; we have to accept the conditions of the inheritance to receive it. The kingdom of Jesus Christ is never passive. It is a transforming encounter that reshapes one’s entire life. If we believe that Christ is our King, and that mercy is the heart of His reign, then we must live as true heirs of that mercy. We first have to ask for that mercy, as the Good Thief did, by frequently examining our consciences, and then receiving God’s mercy in the sacrament of Confession. We allow His peace to reorder our priorities. We allow His forgiveness to heal our wounds and soften our judgments. It means practicing the same merciful love toward others that He has shown us. This is not a “one and done” process. Throughout our lives we continually return to the cross, made present to us in sacramental Confession, so that God will “remember his promise of mercy” towards us once again.

To celebrate Christ the King is to remember who we are: not people defined by success or failure, not by status or reputation, but by the fact that we belong to the One who loves us to the very end. Our lives must bear witness that His kingdom has come near, that it is breaking into the world wherever mercy is offered, wherever reconciliation is pursued, wherever love triumphs over fear.

And so today we give thanks that we have been made heirs of the kingdom of Christ. We pray for the grace to live now a life of peace, mercy, truth, and humble service. And we ask the Lord to make us instruments of His reconciliation in a world that longs for the light of the true King, who remembers His mercy forever.

[1] See Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, *Jesus the Divine Physician: Encountering Christ in the Gospel of Luke*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 158.