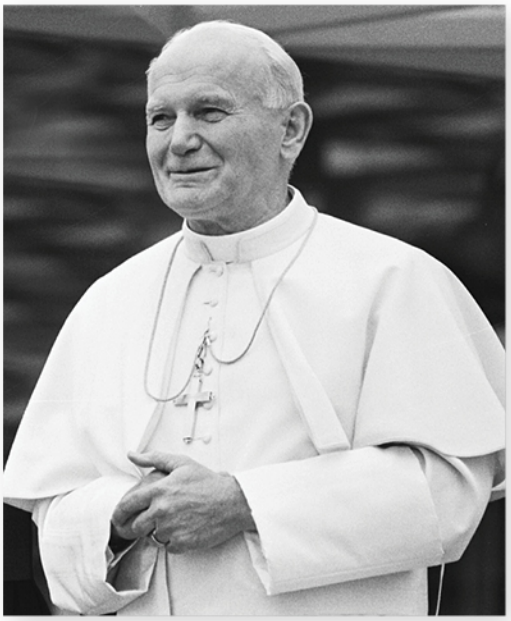
REFLECTION

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The last Sunday of the liturgical year is dedicated to Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. This year it is celebrated on November 22nd. Jesus was proclaiming God's kingdom distinguishing it from early kingdoms by saying that His kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36). One of the invocations of the prayer that he taught his disciples is "Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). In the preface to the Eucharistic prayer during this solemnity, it is described as "an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." Let us read excerpts from St. John Paul II's homily on this solemnity, November 22, 1998:

In the Words of
ST. JOHN PAUL II



"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews". This is the title put on the cross. Shortly before Christ's death, one of the two condemned men crucified with him said to him: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom". What kingdom? The object of his request was certainly not an earthly kingdom but another one.

The good thief speaks as if he had heard the words exchanged earlier between Pilate and Christ. Indeed, it was before Pilate that Jesus had been accused of wanting to make himself king. Pilate had questioned him about this: "Are you the King of the Jews" (Jn 18:33). Christ had not denied it; he had explained: "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world" (Jn 18:36). Jesus had replied directly to Pilate's repeated question as to whether he was a king: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (Jn 18:37).

Today's Liturgy speaks of the earthly kingdom of Israel by recalling the anointing of David as King. Yes, God had chosen Israel; he sent it not only prophets but even kings, when the Chosen People insisted on having an earthly ruler. Of all the kings who sat upon the throne of Israel, the greatest was David. When the first reading of this celebration speaks of that kingdom, it does so to recall that Jesus of Nazareth was of the line of King David, but also, and above all, to emphasize that the royalty proper to Christ is of a different kind.

The words which Mary heard at the Annunciation are significant: "The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:32-33). This kingdom, then, is not only the earthly kingdom of David, which came to an end. It is the Kingdom of Christ, which will never end, the eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of truth, of love and of eternal life.

The Good Thief crucified with Jesus came in some way to the heart of this truth. Indeed, in a certain sense he became a prophet of this eternal Kingdom when, hanging on the cross, he said: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). Christ said in reply: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43)