

## **A King who loves me**

A five-year old child observed his grandmother praying every morning before a crucifix in their home. The child asked, “Lola, what does INRI on the cross mean?” The grandma replied, “It means Jesus, the King of the Jews.” “A king? Why is He crucified? Why did He die on the cross?” The grandma explained, “My child, that is how Jesus our King showed His love for us.” The grandma then invited and taught the child to pray.

When Pilate inquired about Jesus being a King of the Jews, Jesus responds, “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18,36). Jesus defines that the nature of His kingship is not based on the standards of the world, originating from one’s ambition, achieved by competition, and usually leads to oppression. Rather, Jesus’ kingdom originates from God, entered in through a new spiritual life from heaven, and leads to salvation. With a new birth by water and Spirit through our baptism, we enter and belong to this kingdom.

Then, when Pilate tried to affirm Jesus’ political kingship, Jesus replied: “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth” (Jn 18: 37). Here Jesus explains and reveals His heavenly identity and mission. As the Son of God, Jesus was obedient to be the incarnate Word, to reveal the truth of the Father’s love for mankind and proclaim His kingdom.

When did Jesus reveal Himself as king? Pope Francis answers, “At the event of the Cross!” (*Christ the King Angelus Message*, 2015). The cross indeed used to be seen as disgrace and failure. But when Jesus accepted the Cross, when He gave His life for the world, at the Cross we see Jesus’ love, a love that is gratuitous.

Jesus in His conversation with Pilate finally said, “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice” (Jn 18: 37). How can we listen to Jesus’ voice? Look the Cross! Pray to Jesus on the Cross.

On this solemnity of Christ the King, Pope Francis suggests these beautiful words to say in our hearts: “Jesus gave his life for me, in order to save each one of us from our sins.” Today, before the crucifix, I invite you tell Jesus the words the grandmother taught the child to say in prayer, “Oh Jesus, thank you for being a King who loves me. Amen.”