

**Homily for November 21, 2004  
Christ the King C Cycle**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**2 Samuel 5:1-3**

**Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5**

**Colossians 1:12-20**

**Luke 23:35-43**

## *The Lord's Kingdom and ours is not of this world.*

On the cross, three times, the criminals taunted Jesus with variations of that important question: "If you are the king of the Jews, why don't you save yourself? If you are really King of the Jews, why don't you save yourself from the cross?"

Finally came the last one, the big one, "If you are the King, why don't you save yourself and us from the cross?" It is the "and us from the cross" that rings through the centuries and into our hearts. Isn't that our question as well? Jesus Christ, if you are the Son of God, why didn't you save yourself from the cross? Jesus Christ, why didn't you save us from our crosses? Jesus, if you are the Son of God, why don't you take those crosses off those people's backs? Off our backs? If you can't save these people from the cross, perhaps you aren't the Son of God after all.

Today we are at the very mystery of God, the mystery of the universe, at the very heart of the mystery of love. We believe in a God who lived a human life and died a human death. And we believe that in Jesus Christ, God has overcome death and shares that triumph with all of us, not in spite of - but through the struggle, the death we all endure. God

chose to experience the place of the greatest pain, the cross. In the cross, we are met with the very mystery of God, where God chose not to avoid the suffering of this world. It needs to be clearly said that the nature of God is not to avoid suffering...that the nature of love is not to avoid pain or the places of pain. That's the way love is. That's the way God is. Loving people do not use their resources and connections to avoid the pain of their loved ones.

You know that, and so do I. The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine, they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself and us." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

"My kingdom does not belong to this world," Jesus says in John 18:36. That is made abundantly clear by the style and substance of his regalia. A worldly king dresses in fine clothing, but Christ the King is stripped of his garments. This king's entourage, rather than drawing close to him, dropping his name and seeking to be identified with him, runs away from him and denies even knowing him. While a king of this world receives rings on his fingers, this king we call Christ has nails driven through his hands. People shout the

praises of a worldly king, while this one hears the revilements of the onlookers. It is hoped that a king of this age lives long; Christ the King they crucify. Worldly kings wear crowns of gold and sit on magnificent thrones. This one wears a crown of thorns and is hung upon a cross. Yet this is the pattern of our life, the inspiration for our life. The holy food, the hungry meal we eat here is not enough alone to satisfy in this life, yet it nourishes for life everlasting.

Emperor Menelik II ruled Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) from 1889 to 1913. Menelik liked to keep up with the times. In 1890, when he learned that a prisoner had been electrocuted in New York, he decided that the electric chair should become part of his modernization plan for Abyssinia. He quickly put in an order for three electric chairs from the American manufacturer. What a disappointment! After the chairs arrived and were unpacked, the emperor found that they wouldn't work because Abyssinia had no electricity. But all was not lost. Menelik decided to use one of the electric chairs for his imperial throne.

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