

JESUS CHRIST *and the Kingdom of God* **Texts from the** *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

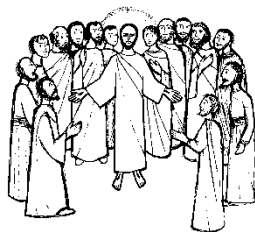
‘THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND’

The Church the beginning of that kingdom

‘Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel.”’ (Mk 1:14-15) ‘To carry out the will of the Father Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth.’ Now the Father’s will is ‘to raise up men to share in his own divine life’. He does this by gathering men around his Son Jesus Christ. This gathering is the Church, ‘on earth the seed and beginning of the kingdom’. (Vatican II, the Church) (541)

All are called to gather around Christ

Christ stands at the heart of this gathering of men into the ‘family of God’. By his word, through the signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery - his death on the cross and his Resurrection - he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ (Jn 12:32) Into this union with Christ all men are called. (542)



THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM

Everyone is called to enter by accepting Jesus’ word

Everyone is called to enter the kingdom. First announced to the children of Israel, this messianic kingdom is intended to accept men of all nations. To enter it, one must first accept Jesus’ word:

“The word of the Lord is compared to a seed which is sown in a field; those who hear it with faith and are numbered among the little flock of Christ have truly received the kingdom. Then, by its own power, the seed sprouts and grows until the harvest.” (Vatican II, the Church) (543)

The kingdom of the poor and the lowly

The kingdom belongs to *the poor and the lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to ‘preach the good news to the poor’; he declares them blessed, for ‘theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ To them - the ‘little ones’ - the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. Jesus shares the life of the poor, from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst, and deprivation. Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom. (544)

Sinners are also invited

Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’ (Mk 2:17) He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father’s boundless mercy for them and the vast ‘joy in heaven over one sinner who repents’. (Lk 15:7) The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life ‘for the forgiveness of sins’. (Mt 26:28) (545)

The parables of the kingdom

Jesus’ invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching. Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough. Deeds are required.

The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? What use has he made of the talents he has received? Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to ‘know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven’. For those who stay ‘outside’, everything remains enigmatic. (546)



THE SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

'Mighty works and wonders and signs' that manifest the messianic Kingdom

Jesus accompanies his words with many 'mighty works and wonders and signs', which manifest that the kingdom is present in him and attest that he was the promised Messiah. (547)

Miracles invite belief in Jesus as the Son of God

The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. To those who turn to him in faith, he grants what they ask. So *miracles* strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. But his miracles can also be occasions for 'offence'; they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons. (548)

Jesus came to free us from the slavery of sin

By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness and death, Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin, which thwarts them in their vocation as God's sons and causes all forms of human bondage. (549)

Exorcisms - the defeat of the kingdom of Satan

The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: 'If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come among you.' (Mt 12:26,28) Jesus' *exorcisms* free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over the 'ruler of this world'. The kingdom of God will be definitively established through Christ's cross: 'God reigned from the wood.' (550)



'THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM'

The chosen Twelve remain forever associated with the kingdom

From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission. He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and 'sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.' (Lk 9:2) They remain associated for ever with Christ's kingdom, for through them he directs the Church:

"As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Lk 22:29-30)

Peter's unique mission - to be the unshakeable rock of the Church

Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve; Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Our Lord then declared to him: 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.' (Mt 16:18)

Christ the 'living stone', thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it. (552)

The keys of the kingdom are given to Peter

Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' (Mt 16:19)

The 'power of the keys' designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: 'Feed my sheep.' (Jn 21:15-17)

The power to bind and loose connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom. (553)

IN BRIEF

- **The kingdom of heaven was inaugurated on earth by Christ. 'This Kingdom shone out before men in the word, in the works and in the presence of Christ' (Vatican II). The Church is the seed and beginning of this kingdom. Its keys are entrusted to Peter. (567)**

