

Jesus: King of the Universe

Homily by Fr. Octavio Trejo-Flores, Society of the Divine Savior

For the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Luke 23:35-43

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. As Christians we acknowledge that Jesus is not only our king but also the king of the universe. But what does “universe” mean in light of what we know about it scientifically? How can an eternal God be the ruler of everything physical?

Through experimentation, science uses the scientific method to explain how things work. Many people believe what science teaches. Modern society has become more and more skeptical. And perhaps little by little it has begun to replace faith for what science can prove.

In the Gospel of Luke, we read that Jesus promised eternal life to the “Good Thief” who hung on a cross close to Jesus’ cross. The Lukan account of the crucifixion of Jesus represents two groups of people: those who are skeptical and ask Jesus for actual proofs (“If you are King of the Jews, save yourself”) and those who recognize Jesus as the Son of God (“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”). The Good thief is the one who believed not because he had seen, but because he had faith.

Jesus promised eternal life to the “Good Thief.” But what is eternal life? In the Creed we confess that we await “the life of the world to come.” The Church teaches us that when we die, we end our journey in this world, but we begin a new life, eternal life. By this doctrine, the Church invites us to reflect on our future, which is “the resurrection of the dead” and eternal life. (Cf. CCC 1020).

However, according to some scientists, nothing is eternal, not even the universe itself. According to Dr. Renu Malhotra, an American planetary scientist and professor of planetary sciences at the University of Arizona’s Lunar and Planetary Laboratory, the

universe is not eternal because it “involves many timescales.” Dr. Malhotra claims that the age of the universe is approximately 13.7/14 billion years old. She says that this is based on the oldest light that reaches our world.

For his part, Br. Guy J. Consolmagno, a Jesuit astronomer and director of the Vatican’s Observatory (yes, the Vatican has an observatory!), states that science is not chaotic because it follows laws. Hence, Br. Guy states that “science depends on authority” and only takes fragments of real events to explain how things work. Br. Guy also says that science is actually good, and the universe is worth the effort to learn those laws.

Like in the Lukan account of the crucifixion of Jesus, the skeptical thief rejected Jesus because he rejected all authority: “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.” In contrast, hanging on the cross the Good Thief recognized Jesus as the savior and his authority. Thus, he asked him to be redeemed.

The truth is that all of us, believers and skeptics, live under the same sky. And so, for those of us who acknowledge Jesus as our king and accept his authority and his power to save us we have to be a bridge that reaches those who have not accepted Him yet. Like the Good Thief, we have to build bridges. So, how can we do that? Luke helps us to understand that. The Good Thief said to the other thief: “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation?” Instead of avoiding talk about controversial topics such as science, perhaps this could be our starting point to help us cross the bridge.

By accepting the love of God, we have to understand that God will never forget his promise, so God will never abandon us, whether we are believers or skeptical. And so, let us ask God to give us his divine love. Let us also ask Him to help us to understand his love so that we may faithfully present his universal and infinite love to our brothers and sisters.