

Asked by Pilate, “are you a king, then?” we heard Jesus’ reply: “Mine is not a kingdom of this world”, meaning that his kingdom is not from this world. The kingdom is in the world, a seed of God’s plan for authentic happiness.

If we go back to the start, to the genesis, we understand why this is so:

The theologian who wrote the book of Genesis teaches that the first sin of humankind was to grasp the knowledge that pertains only to God, and from that fatal choice God’s plan for paradise was frustrated. From original blessing, the man and his wife bequeathed to us a hostile jungle.

The kingdom that is from this world is a kingdom of lies, “truth, what is that”; a kingdom of injustices, “If he were not a criminal, we should not be handing him over to you”; a kingdom of fools, “we have no king but Caesar.”

Jesus’ kingdom is other than the kingdom of this sorry ship of fools. “I was born for this ... to bear witness to the truth.” Jesus returns to his Father, having borne witness to the Father’s truth. The promise to sinful, sorry humankind – “Your offspring will crush the serpent’s head” – is being fulfilled. “The truth will set you free” was Jesus’

pledge to his inquisitors who persisted in their bondage to lies, to this point of consigning him to death.

The wounds of the Suffering Servant foretold by Isaiah and the obedience of God's Son exalted in the letter to the Hebrews are the vehicles in which the truth triumphs.

So, Jesus goes to his execution with regal assurance, "Yes, I am a king." The Holy Spirit, 70 years after the event that we call 'good Friday' and are commemorating joyfully today, inspired John to teach us that the saving truth of God, coveted by humanity in the beginning for its own gratification, is evident on the Cross.

There, it is not the suffering that is the fruit of lies, of injustice, of pride that is revealed. The suffering seen on the Cross is the suffering of love. The death of Jesus that we venerate as we kneel before the Cross is the victory of love.

In a world in evolutionary development, we find consolation and direction from the Cross of Jesus.

Australian paleontologists working for more than twenty years in Africa recently announced the discovery of the skeletal remains of a child, buried at least 2 million years ago. This is the earliest member of our human species discovered so far.

Why, we may ask, has the world slowly turned for such time? The response of a believer is that humanity has been in waiting, in exile,

for an authentic human being. It is on the Cross that the one true human being is unveiled in his naked vulnerability.

On the clock of evolution, the Cross lights up for the slightest imaginable moment. If we imagine evolution as a clockface about to toll midnight, the recorded history of humanity is less than a fraction of a millisecond in the revolution of the hands of the clock.

For us who believe that Christ is our Saviour, the instant that he hangs upon the Cross is the meaning of all evolution, emerging from God's creative love.

This human being, whom, with the grace of God, we profess at the same time to be the only begotten Son of God shows us the truth of every human being.

The suffering of love is the purpose for which he came into the world, and it is our reason for being born into this world.

On those occasions that we choose something more comfortable, more remarkable, more gratifying than the suffering of love, we repeat the mistake of the first humans whose remains may have recently been discovered in that southern African desert.

"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother." We need companions if we are to learn to suffer for love. COVID pandemic draws from us critical responses for our vocation to be one with Christ our King. One response stems from selfishness, the other from the suffering of

love. On this Good Friday, Mary the mother in mourning is our companion, our model; one who, with her spouse, Joseph, intercedes for the world. Mary, Queen of sorrows, pray for us. St Joseph, patron of a happy death, pray for us. By your death and resurrection, Lord deliver us.