“Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum” — “What I have written, I have written” (Jn 19:22)

1. A plaque that causes discomfort since Calvary

In the history of the Passion of Christ, there is a seemingly secondary element that has generated as much debate as the very wood of the Cross itself: the **Titulus Crucis**, the plaque Pilate ordered to be placed above the head of Jesus.
Saint John narrates it this way:

> *“Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (Jn 19:19).*

It was not a pious gesture, but the statement of the reason for the condemnation. According to Roman custom, the crime was publicly displayed so that all could understand the sentence. However, in this case, the inscription did not describe a crime but —unwittingly— proclaimed an eternal truth.

---

2. Three languages, one single affirmation

The Gospel adds a unique detail:

> *“It was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek” (Jn 19:20).*

- **Hebrew**: The sacred language of the people of the Covenant. It evokes the Law, the Prophets, and the messianic promise. For the Jews, the phrase was a direct statement that Jesus was the awaited Messiah, even if Pilate’s intention was otherwise.
- **Latin**: The language of the Empire. It represents Rome’s political and military authority. There, the inscription meant that Jesus was a royal pretender, a rival to Caesar.
- **Greek**: The language of culture and commerce. It was the international language of thought. In Greek, the phrase addressed the entire civilized world.

This triple inscription holds a profound meaning: **Christ is King for all peoples, cultures,**

and eras. From the wood of the cross, His message was sealed in the languages that represented religion, power, and human wisdom.

---

3. The conflict in Jerusalem: “Change the text”

The chief priests, upon reading the inscription, reacted with indignation:

> *“Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am the King of the Jews’” (Jn 19:21).*

Here begins the conflict. For them, the phrase in the present tense and as an affirmation was equivalent to acknowledging that the accusation was true. They wanted to turn a proclamation into a mere record of the words of a condemned man. In other words: **they sought to relativize the truth**.

Pilate’s response is terse, almost prophetic:

> *“What I have written, I have written” (Jn 19:22).*

On the human level, Pilate acts with pride and obstinacy; on the divine level, his refusal to change the text becomes a providential seal. What was meant to be mockery or a legal notice turns into **a messianic and universal proclamation**.

---

4. The current conflict: Rewriting Christ?

The tension that was lived on Calvary is still alive today. In many cultural, media, and even academic circles, there is an attempt to “rewrite” Christ:

- Presenting Him only as a moral teacher, not as King and Lord.
- Reducing His message to cultural heritage, stripping it of its divine character.

- Adapting His figure to passing ideologies, removing what is uncomfortable.

The Titulus Crucis challenges us to keep the original proclamation intact: **Jesus is King**, not only of a group or a time, but of all humanity and all history.

---

5. The paradox of the pigment: lapis lazuli and divine kingship

Although the Gospel does not describe the colors of the inscription, some artistic studies and medieval traditions point to the use of precious pigments such as **lapis lazuli** to highlight sacred inscriptions. Lapis lazuli, with its deep blue, was a symbol of heaven, eternity, and divine glory (cf. Ex 24:10).

If the inscription of condemnation had been highlighted with this color, the irony would have been absolute: the world intended humiliation, but the color proclaimed heavenly kingship. In theological terms, this illustrates how **God clothes with glory what the world believes to be defeated**.

---

6. Pastoral keys for living the Titulus today

1. **Confess publicly**
   It is not enough to believe in private. The triple language of the Titulus reminds us that faith must be proclaimed in every sphere of life.
2. **Resist rewriting**
   Just as Pilate refused to alter the inscription, the Christian must remain firm in the face of the temptation to soften or adapt the truth of the Gospel.
3. **Recognize the universality of Christ**
   The kingship of Jesus transcends cultures and borders. Welcoming Him as King means opening ourselves to all peoples.
4. **Transform humiliation into glory**
   Just as the cross became a throne, our trials can be an opportunity to manifest the lordship of Christ.

7. Conclusion: “Quid scripsi, scripsi”

The plaque of the Titulus Crucis is more than an archaeological relic. It is a **prophecy written by human hands and sealed by Providence**. Its triple inscription reminds us that Christ is not merely a historical figure but the **Eternal King**. And its conflict in Jerusalem still echoes today, because there are still those who want to soften His message.

In the face of that temptation, Pilate’s response —even from his indifference— is a call to fidelity:

> *“What I have written, I have written.”*

The Christian who lives this truth becomes a “living titulus”: a witness who, with his life, proclaims without fear and without modification that Jesus is the **King of kings**.