

# Christ, the King of All



I was painting the walls in my bedroom the night she died. (Light beige to complement the maroon bedspread.) I remember juggling a dripping paint roller as I climbed down the stepladder to hear a friend blurt over the phone, "Diana and Dodi are dead." For the next several days I, along with most of the world, was riveted by the images of flowers outside the palace, the funeral procession and the heart-breaking image of Princess Diana's young sons walking bravely behind her coffin. It was pageantry, spectacle and drama on a scale most of us had never seen before.

When I think of "royalty," I think of those events. I associate "king" or "queen" with the tight-lipped Queen Elizabeth rigidly sitting in Westminster Abbey, in attendance at a funeral she didn't want to have anything to do with. And so I have some difficulty reconciling my mental image of a monarch with Jesus and the feast of "Our Lord Jesus Christ King of All" (commonly known as "Christ the King").

Our modern experience with royalty is either with figureheads like Queen Elizabeth or King Juan Carlos of Spain, or autocrats and dictators like King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Historical figures don't help much, either. King Henry VIII, a womanizing egotist who created his own church?

Louis XIV of France, who called himself the "Sun King" because he thought the world revolved around him like the planets around the sun?

Certainly none of these images are accurate for Jesus. In order to fully appreciate the importance of this last feast of the church year, we need to take



a look at what being a king meant in biblical times.

*Anointed Messiah.* First, the king was a symbol of mediation between God and the people of Israel. The title of the kings in the line of David was *hameshiach* ("the anointed one") from which we get our English word *messiah*. The primary duties of the king

were to ensure justice, defend Israel, appoint the chief priests, eliminate idolatry and oversee the religious life of his people. Of course, some Davidic kings did a better job than others.

*The People's Leader.* The king was never to be the supreme ruler, a right that fell to Yahweh alone. According to the Law, the king's heart should not be lifted up above his brethren (Dt 17:20). In other words, the king was both part of the people of God as well as their leader. One of the most important things the king did was to pray for his people and bless them in the name of Yahweh, as well as make a sin offering on their behalf (2 Sam 6:18; 24:25).

These attributes are more than just of historical interest. Understanding them helps us appreciate how we are to relate to Jesus in his role as "King of All."

## Jesus, the Messiah-King

As both God and man, Jesus is not only the symbol of mediation between God and the people, He is the mediator Himself, the ultimate *hameshiach*. As the *Messiah-King*, He is both our defender and the arbiter of justice, a role that is often pictured at the Last Judgment. In one of the great paradoxes of faith, Jesus is both the one to whom we appeal for mercy and the one before whom we stand in judgment. Yet His role is not to be punitive, but fair. We have nothing to fear from Our King because He isn't "out to get us," but

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rather makes sure that we are treated fairly—and mercifully.

The Davidic kings were always subject to God. Since Jesus is God Incarnate, His kingship is supreme. However, because He was fully and truly human, His heart was “not lifted up above his brethren,” either. He was, as the Scriptures tell us, “like us in all things except sin.” In a way no earthly king can, Jesus is both part of us and above us; He stands beside us and goes before us. He is our brother and our leader. He shows us how to live while, simultaneously, being the one we live for.

Just as the kings of old prayed for their people, so Jesus prays for us: “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them” (John 17:19-26). This prayer is, of course, the prelude to the ultimate sin offering

made by the king. Whereas the kings of David offered an animal sacrifice, Jesus offered Himself on the cross for the remission of all sin for peoples. In doing so, He completed the work of all the previous kings for all time.

So what does this mean for us—in practical terms?

### Jesus Is Our Peace

When Pope Pius XI first established the solemn feast of “Our Lord Jesus Christ King of All” in 1925, he offered it as an answer to secularism. In his encyclical *Quas Primas*, he writes: “Men must look for the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ.” Certainly, our world needs peace more than anything else. By allowing Christ to be the ruler of our lives, we begin to change the world, ushering in the Kingdom of Heaven one family at a time.

As our King, Jesus wants us to follow His direction in all aspects of our

lives, to live in such a way that we are open to His guidance. It means that we realize, on a soul-deep level, that we are in need of a leader, who always has our best interests at heart. Moreover, just as the kings of old were both part of the people and their leader, so, too, we can have confidence that no matter what we are going through, Jesus will be both showing us the way and walking along side us.

If we are to grow in our faith as mature adults, then it is imperative that we place Christ the King at the center of our lives. It is only through our acceptance of His leadership in our families that we will truly become “salt for the earth.”



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## How to Celebrate: Pray the Act of Dedication.

Most sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon us humbly prostrate before you. We are yours, and yours we wish to be; but to be more surely united with you, behold each one of us freely consecrates himself today to your Most Sacred Heart. Many indeed have never known you; many, too, despising your precepts, have rejected you. Have mercy on them all, most merciful Jesus, and draw them to your Sacred Heart. Be King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken you, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned you; grant that they may quickly return to their Father’s house, lest they die of wretchedness and hunger. Be King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions, or whom discord keeps aloof, and call them back to the harbor of truth and the unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one Shepherd. Grant, O Lord, to your Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm; give tranquility of order to all nations; make the earth resound from pole to pole with one cry: Praise to the divine Heart that wrought our salvation; to it be glory and honor for ever. Amen.

*(Note: A plenary indulgence is granted, if this prayer is recited publicly on the feast of our Lord Jesus Christ King.)*

