

## Christ the King (C)

*There is a story about a little boy whose five year old sister had a rare blood disease and needed a transfusion. The little boy was suggested as a logical donor. 'Son' said the doctor, 'would you give your blood so that your sister can live'. The boy looked taken aback but then said he would do it. The blood was taken and afterwards while he lay in his cot the doctor came to see him. 'Doctor', said the little boy, 'when do I die'. Only then did it dawn on the doctor that the little boy thought he had to give all his blood to save his sister - just as Jesus gave all His blood to save us.*

While he was shedding his blood on the Cross Jesus was taunted and challenged to save himself. The leaders jeered at him shouting: 'let him save himself if he is the Christ'. The soldiers mocked him: 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself. Even one of the men crucified with Jesus abused him. 'Are you not the Christ, he said, 'then, save yourself and us as well'.

But of course he could have saved himself. He told Pilate, for instance, that God would immediately send a host of angels to his rescue if he so wished. The reason he didn't go down that road is because the Kingdom of God is not about saving oneself, but dying to oneself. Jesus said: "he who saves his life, loses it, but the person who loses his life for my sake finds it.

We always admire people who risk their lives to save others in precarious situations. In war they are often given the Victoria Cross for bravery. But we also expend ourselves for others in ordinary everyday life situations and often without recognition.

For instance there are loads of opportunities in marriage for self-sacrifice. If only one person is pulling their weight then things can become a big fraught. I tell couples during the marriage ceremony that the bride and groom are asked to lay

down their lives for each other just as Jesus lay down His life for them. Their married love is modelled on the Paschal mystery whereby Christ gave up his life for our salvation. And then if children come on the scene their opportunities for self-sacrifice are extended. But self-sacrifice for others does not lead to 'doom and gloom' – it will be the source of our greatest joy. Before his passion Jesus spoke about sharing his deep inner joy with his apostles.

When we model our lives on the Paschal Mystery of Christ we not only contemplate Jesus on the Cross, as the crowd did in today's Gospel, but we actually join him there. Jesus said: 'when I am lifted up on the cross I shall draw all people to myself' The more we allow ourselves to be drawn to the cross the greater our fulfilment in life will be whether we be married people or priests, or consecrated persons or single people. It's the secret to a meaningful life here and now and a foretaste of life Eternal.