

## 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.*

As his life ebbed away on the Cross Jesus was taunted into saving himself. The leaders jeered at him yelling: 'let him save himself if he is the Christ'. 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 easily saved himself. He told Pilate, for instance, that His Father in Heaven would immediately send legions of angels to his aid if he so desired. But because He was God as well as man, he was well aware that the Kingdom of God is not about self-seeking or self-serving but self-giving. And every time we give of ourselves for the wellbeing of others we become Christ's partners in extending his Kingdom of Love into this world.

We always admire people who risk their lives to save others in precarious situations. Soldiers are often awarded with the Victoria Cross for bravery on the field of battle. But to expend oneself for others in everyday life situations without scarcely anyone noticing is what makes us great in God's eyes. St Theresa said: 'If we go through life without anyone noticing our good deeds, so much the better'. That's how we become loyal subjects of God's Kingdom.

For instance marriage is laced with hidden opportunities for dying to self. But if only one partner is taking this seriously then things can go haywire. 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. And with the arrival of children the scene will be set for more serious self-giving. But self-sacrifice does not make us downhearted or miserable – it will be the source of our greatest joy. At the Last Supper, despite his approaching passion, Jesus told his apostles about His deep inner joy. And he prayed that they too and indeed all of us would share in that joy.

We not only gaze at the Cross from a distance, as the mostly hostile crowd did on that first Good Friday, but spiritually we're drawn to 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 more Christ-like we become. In this way we'll be well placed to become fully fledged members of His Kingdom in Heaven.