

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 blood transfusion. The blood would have to come from a relative with the same blood type and 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 surprized but then said he would do it. The blood was taken and while he was lying in his cot the doctor came to see how he was. 'Doctor', said he '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. Jesus, of course, was drained of all His blood to save us.

Literally, 'All hell broke loose' on Calvary. Jesus was goaded to save himself. The leaders jeered at him: 'let him save himself if he is the Christ'. The soldiers mocked him too: 'If you are the King of the Jews save yourself. Even one of the men crucified with Jesus joined in. "Are you not the Christ, then save yourself and us as well'. And the crowd too had a go at Him: 'He saved others, himself he cannot save'

But of course saving himself was no problem but His mission was to freely and lovingly lay down his life to free us from eternal death. He said to Pilate, 'My Kingdom is not of this world'. If my kingdom were of this world my men would have prevented me being handed over to you'. People who want to be part of God's 'Kingdom are not in the business of saving their own skin. They are prepared to freely expend themselves in the service of God and neighbour. We reiterate His words. *'He who saves his life loses it, but he who loses his life for my sake keeps it for life eternal'.*

In John's Gospel the Cross is a kind of throne where Jesus reigns triumphantly amidst all the mayhem. The Cross, though cruel and barbarous in itself, is for us believers an object of veneration. Jesus goes freely to His Cross. He reminds Pilate

that he's laying down His life of his own free will. He is not a victim of circumstances. He has freely chosen to lay down his life with the utter certitude that he will take it up again. He's not dragged kicking and screaming to the Cross. He knows the plan of God and has no intention of bowing to the crowd's wishes by spectacularly coming down from the cross. He drinks the cup of suffering to the dregs.

For Jesus the laying down of his life was the defining moment of His mission. He died that we might live. He gave His life to atone for the sins of humanity, making us righteous before the Father and re-opening the gates of Heaven for all who believe in Him.

Today is the Feast of Christ the King. Only those willing and ready to expend their lives for the King will be admitted to His Kingdom. Only those who lose their lives in the service of Christ will reign with Him.