

# SoulSpace

SERIES: OUR VOCATION, OUR CALL.

Season colour: **WHITE**In this series, **Fr Gerard Moloney CSSR** looks at the common vocation we all share as Christians.

The real kings and queens of today – the royal houses of Europe and beyond – may not have absolute power like in the past but they're still associated with privilege and nobility, and we're still fascinated with them. Think of all those who watched the royal wedding recently, or who get excited about a royal baby. Royalty fascinates us – whether king or queen of the jungle or queen of England.

## FEAST'S ORIGIN

Today's feast is about a very different kind of royalty. We honour Jesus, the servant king. Pope Pius XI introduced this feast in 1926. Think back to the world of the 1920s. Mussolini was in power in Italy. Hitler was leading the Nazi party in Germany. Stalin was crushing his opponents in Russia; extremist movements offering messiah-type leaders were on the rise. Pius XI wanted to make a statement. In creating this feast he was saying to the world that despite dictatorships and economic collapse, and the rise of ideologies of left and right, Jesus Christ was still King of the Universe. There is only one lord, one ruler, one king – Jesus of Nazareth, a king who washed people's feet and was nailed to a cross. The kingship of Jesus turns our notions of monarchy upside down. It's symbolised by his crown. The crown on his head was not made of gold or trimmed with diamonds, but of thorns. He didn't come to lead armies, or levy taxes, or occupy palaces. He doesn't rule by might or threats or Twitter. He doesn't sit on a gilded throne. His kingdom is not an earthly kingdom or something from *Game of Thrones*. It's about a new way of living, based not on control or power or war-making, but on love and mercy and service of others. He is a king who treats everyone

equally, who is interested not in possessions or money or status but in people and compassion and justice. Jesus' authority comes from God and it's an authority that builds people up rather than diminishes them. All that matters to Jesus is God his Father, and to serve God means to serve all. To be a servant king.

## TWO CHALLENGES

Today's feast offers a couple of challenges. First, for the church. It's a reminder that power and authority in the church should be about service; that those in leadership must model themselves on Jesus, the servant king, and not on any earthly model of authority. While the church is not a democracy, it's a pity that it still has a structure of authority and even of dress and titles that are based on a medieval model of government and have not been substantially updated, though Pope Francis by his own example of simplicity and humility is trying to change that. Second, today's feast challenges us to think about who or what rules our lives – and to honour the only king that matters, Jesus Christ. Society today is a bit of a rat race. It's about wealth and status, celebrity and privilege. It's highly competitive. Like the celebrities competing to be queen or king of the jungle, there's an element in each of us that wants to be number one. We'd quite like the status and glamour associated with royalty and wealth. The feast of Christ the King reminds us of what our priorities must be; that, whatever our vocation in life, we must be at the service of others, and never lord it over anyone. Our model is Christ, the servant king. ■

series ends



## Today's readings

**Daniel 7:13-14**  
**Apocalypse 1:5-8**  
**John 18:33-37**

## GOD'S WORD TODAY

Today's Gospel presents Jesus as the unifying focal point of the human race. Jesus is the one who offers light, truth and life to those who will accept them. In a world which seems to be becoming more and more fragmented, some such unifying focus appears to be increasingly necessary.

Throughout the Gospel of John there has been the idea of judgment, not so much the final judgment at the end, but rather the judgment which human beings pronounce upon themselves by their decision for or against Jesus and his message. In the Gospel tradition, the evangelists present Jesus as respecting human freedom and decision; he may well regret the choice certain people make, but recognises this as their right. Perhaps today's feast might remind us that the divisions which we may think so important, of race, class and religion, are simply human inventions; that for God it is enough that a person is a human being, made in God's image and likeness and that the values Jesus teaches are basically human values which anyone can respect and live by. Perhaps the world would be that better place if we all learned to accept one another as fellow human beings with the same hopes and fears; and perhaps in that way the Kingdom of God will become a reality in our world.

## Our vocation is to imitate Jesus, the servant king.

If you're into reality TV, then you're probably familiar with *I'm A Celebrity... Get me out of here*. It's a game show series in which a dozen or more celebrities live together in a jungle environment for a few weeks. They have no luxuries, and must do various tasks to win meals and privileges for their companions. These tasks put them face to face with insects and other creepy crawlies or with being required to eat extremely unappetising food. They end up having to do tasks that they – or we – would never normally choose to do. And why are they doing all this? They are competing to be king or queen of the jungle. A peculiar kind of royalty.

# WHAT RULES YOUR LIFE?

