

Prince Albert travels to Dubai without Princess Charlene - Queen Rania drives the Duchess of Cornwall around Jordan - Princess Catharine-Amalia tries on a tiara inside Queen Maxima's wardrobe.

A student of mine had an interesting hobby. He kept tabs on all the royal families of Europe. Usually we only hear about Great Britain's royals – but many a dynasty is multiplied all over Europe, inbred heirs to some of the great kings and queens of history. And news of their doings is available in little known periodicals. Of course none of these royals rule kingdoms any more; they are more like heirlooms to remind us of the days of real pomp and circumstance.

So why in 1926 did the Church institute this feast of Christ the King? I suppose because by the end of the First World War monarchs were toppling everywhere and states were becoming purely secular – devoid of the past trappings of absolute monarchs – giving way to parliaments of commoners. And the Church in its apparel and monumental appearance may have felt, among reasons theological, some need to conserve that past as being its own past as well.

The very word Christ means royal as far back as the Gospel and Hebrew Bible. In Hebrew it means the Anointed One. If you read the *Books of Samuel and Kings* in the Old Testament you will be immersed in the politics of those times. Israel had been a loose confederation of twelve tribes, decentralized and disorganized, under pressures from surrounding kingdoms. So a movement began to call for centralization around a single leader – a king – to control Israel's destiny.

Samuel was against it for all the reasons people oppose big government today. As he expresses it in 1st Samuel 8: *The governance of the king who will rule you will be as follows: He will take your sons and assign them to his chariots and horses, and they will run before his chariot. He will appoint from among them his commanders of thousands and of hundreds. He will make them do his plowing and harvesting and produce his weapons of war and chariotry. He will use your daughters as perfumers, cooks, and bakers. He will take your best fields, vineyards, and olive groves, and give them to his servants . . . He will tithe your crops and grape harvests. . . also tithe your flocks . . . you will become his slaves.* Sound familiar? Nevertheless Israel chose monarchy – Saul, David, Solomon and eventually Civil War . . . and the downfall of their kingdom and dispersal of their people – yet they longed for its return

Which again raises the question – why apply the title of King or Christ (the Anointed) to Jesus or produce images of him enthroned – who had no place to lay his head, who walked among the marginal people of his day, saying: blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, blessed are the gentle, the merciful, the uncontaminated of heart, the persecuted. Pilate raised the question: *You are a king then?* Jesus replies: *That's what they say but this is why I am here: to witness to the truth, to un-conceal things forgotten, to which the world is blinded by the news of the day - - who also redirected our eyes to the "royalty" of creation itself all around us when he said: Learn from the way of the wild flowers . . . not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of them.*

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