

In the 'day job' I used to have in Oxford University at the Bodleian Library, during my time there I met one King, and one King to be – King Juan Carlos of Spain, and our own Prince Charles.

King Juan Carlos, with his movie-star looks and charisma, knew how to work a crowd: Prince Charles, on the other hand, was reserved, quite small, and rather diffident.

Ironically, it was in the same place that I met another King who changed my life forever – Jesus Christ the King of the Universe.

The King; whose: "Kingdom is not from this world." Jn. 18: 36

The King; whose throne is the Cross because, there God: "Made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood." Col. 1: 20

I remember it so well: it was Monday – Whit (Pentecost)-Monday actually – May 27 1968, and I was at work.

It was 2.15 in the afternoon, and I was looking out of a window onto Trinity College gardens.

There was no vision; I wasn't struck to the ground in ecstasy: I just knew from that moment that there is a loving, personal God who became the man, Jesus, to save me, and that I had to become a Catholic.

I knew for certain that God had: "Rescued [me] from the kingdom of darkness and transferred [me] into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased [my] freedom and forgave [my] sins." Col. 1: 13 – 14

The implications of that call from the Lord, I've been exploring ever since; and will be into eternity.

In the Our Father we pray to the Father that His Kingdom will come on earth, as it is in Heaven.

I suspect we probably pray that with our fingers metaphorically crossed that it won't; for we want to be 'kings' of our life, our own little worlds, don't we?

We might wistfully think about the Kingdom of Heaven now and again as that place 'up there' I might get to someday – but not now Lord – and certainly don't bring it into my world!

So often in Scripture – and particularly the Book of Revelation - the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a great feast – a wedding feast: "The wedding feast of the Lamb." Rev. 19: 7

All this awaits us: we don't know the date, but that encounter will take place!

So let's pray that the Lord may prepare us for this, knowing that: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." Rev. 19: 9

Monarchs and Empires will rise and fall, but Jesus, the True King won't.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Heb. 13: 8

And this life is our preparation – our engagement period as it were – to Jesus, the Lamb of God

In marriage, although two people become one body, we don't just do it in isolation; we become a member of a family.

If we respond to the Lord's free invitation to join His marriage feast, we don't do it in isolation either: we can't be a Christian on our own, we become a member of the Lord's family, and that 'family' is His Church; with all its human faults and failings – just like any family.

But it's not an optional extra: as Paul tells us in the second reading: "The Church is his body, he is its head." Col. 1: 18

And, as the Head of the Body, Jesus says: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For cut off from me you can do nothing." Jn. 15: 5

Talking of grapevines, as Jesus does there, let's remember that the first 'sign' of His Kingship was at the Marriage Feast at Cana where He changed water into wonderful, vintage wine; and they all had a party!

"A Christian is one who is invited to join in the feast, to the joy of being saved, to the joy of being redeemed, to the joy of sharing life with Jesus.

This is a joy! You are called to a party! A feast is a gathering of people who talk, laugh, celebrate, and are happy together.

Have you ever seen anyone party on their own? No: that would be boring. Opening the bottle of wine alone . . . That's not a feast, it's something else.

You have to party with others, with the family, with friends, with those who've been invited, as I was invited.

Being Christian means belonging, belonging to this body, to the people that have been invited to the feast: this is Christian belonging."

Pope Francis: Meditation at his morning Mass in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae; 5.11.2013

And the Wedding Feast of the Lamb is so beautiful, and eternally satisfying: the Lord God, beauty, goodness, truth, tenderness, and fullness of love.

So, everyone is invited to the Lord's wedding feast; because we're not just guests of Jesus, the King, we're members of His 'Royal Family' since, through faith and Baptism, we are brothers and sisters of Jesus, and each other.

You may be thinking, I'm not good enough to be part of the 'Royal Family,' I'm a sinner.

So am I: but ALL of us sinners are invited; ALL of us sinners are invited to become one of the family.

For, again, as Paul says in the second reading today: "He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to the saints, who live in [His] light." Col. 1: 12

In a few moments we're invited to Consecrate our Diocese, and ourselves, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; but let's put out of our minds those traditional, sickly images of the Sacred Heart.

Rather, let's reflect upon Jesus on the Cross, where His heart is rent asunder out of love for us; and, from His Sacred Heart: "Blood and water flowed out." Jn. 19: 34 "For the healing of the nations."

Rev. 22: 2

Like the penitent thief who was crucified with Jesus, may our prayer today be: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Lk. 23: 42

Then, when we reach the end of our life's journey, Jesus will say to us: "I assure you; today you will be with me in paradise." Lk. 23: 43