

## Letter from the Associate Priest at Crowland Abbey

Dear Friends,

I'm guessing that at least some of you are really organised and will have probably done a good deal (perhaps all) of your Christmas shopping already, and there will be others amongst you (like me!) who always leave it until the last minute! Before we, in the Church, can begin to turn our hearts and minds towards Advent and Christmas, we celebrate the end of the Church's year, the last Sunday of November, with the festival of Christ the King.

This festival was instituted as recently as 1925 by Pope Pius XI. He connected what he perceived as the increasing denial of Christ as King to the rise of secularism throughout much of Europe, and hoped, amongst other things, that, through the celebration of this festival, people would gain faith, strength, and courage from the affirmation that Christ reigns in our hearts and minds.

Sadly, however, secularism has broadened. Individualism has been embraced to such an extent that for many, nowadays, the only authority at all is self, and the idea of Christ as King is rejected. Some people dislike Jesus' titles of "Lord" and "King", believing these titles to represent oppression.

However, such individuals miss the point entirely, because the kingship of Jesus Christ is wholly and completely a kingship of love, caring, humility and service. Jesus himself said: "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45). He demonstrated this humility and service on many occasions, notably at the Last Supper, when He fell to His knees and washed His disciples' feet (a duty, in those days, reserved for the lowest slave of all), and ultimately in His death on the cross.

At this time of year, as we gradually look towards celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ at Christmas, I pray that we may be able, not only to open our hearts and embrace Christ as King, but also to embrace His humility in our lives - a humility articulated particularly well by St Paul in his letter to the Philippians: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:3-11).

Yours in Christ  
Annie Billson, Associate Priest