

## My Turn

# A Holy Cross monarchy?

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Once upon a time, there was a magnificent, magical, and much beloved mountain valley. But all was not well in the land, for its people were episodically afflicted with various medical maladies. The remoteness of the valley made it difficult for the people to receive adequate care.

Hearing the people's cries, elders of the day came together for the good of the tormented souls. Though committed to the care of their ailing neighbors, these leaders worried that political pressures might thwart their efforts to aid the suffering. But, royalty, they believed, would naturally stand apart from and above any petty political fray. So, they created a monarchy to rule this Kingdom of the Holy Cross that they had established, and entrusted it with the care of the people.

First among equals in the anointed group was Ronald of Red River, crowned king in secret ceremony. Along with regent prince Peter of the House of Quorum and a royal court of twelve, the crown had absolute dominion over the Kingdom of the Holy Cross.

The people of the kingdom were delighted with the prospect of an end to their pain.

They were content, loyal subjects, comforted by the seemingly benign paternalism of their rulers. They were even reassured by the exercise of authority that seemed strong even when wrong. They preferred not to worry their pretty little heads about mundane matters, and took little notice of the excesses and dysfunctions of the royal family.

When a grand castle befitting the exalted stature and mission of the crown was required, the people voluntarily taxed themselves to pay for it. Even "starving artists" of the valley contributed to the best of their ability. The castle erected on the peoples' land reflected the early support for the Kingdom of the Holy Cross's monarchy.

Nevertheless, over time, the people of the valley bridled at what they saw as insular, arrogant, insensitivity of the kingdom's royalty. The royals had been selected in super-secret deliberation, ascending to their positions of unaccountable power as if by divine right.

They were loyal to their king, to their oath of secrecy, and to one another. Their loyalty to the people in their care was quite another matter.

An early breach in the peoples' trust in the monarchy came about with the shocking exile of three of the kingdom's most powerful servants.

Though these servants often held the sacred power of life and death in their hands as they ministered to the halt, the lame, and the infirm, in the end they were merely dispensable servants of the crown. They were surgically dispatched by the crown's regent, and driven from the realm. Shortly thereafter, a much larger, secretly planned expulsion of care-giving servants was suddenly announced. The crown abruptly declared that the kingdom was facing protracted famine and that not all servants of the crown could be fed. This large-scale banishment was seen by the king's subjects as tantamount to genocide, and they raised their voices in passionate protest.

The people were accustomed to having a say in deliberations that governed their lives. But, to their dismay, the royal regime had long ago established codes of absolute secrecy and control. The crown's minions kept insisting that there really was no problem, that the royal family was simply misunderstood and underappreciated, and that it continued to deserve the peoples' trust.

But the people had lost faith in the royal family and its secret, absolute, impenetrable, unaccountable rule. Relentless royal storytelling and staged public circus could not persuade them otherwise.

Voices of dissent were raised at the monthly audience with the king and royal court, but protests fell upon deaf ears. The king and the royal court were accountable only to themselves. The king's voice increasingly had the sound of a foreign dialect. "*L'etat c'est moi*," seemed to be his words.

The voice of the people would not be stilled. Would the lands of the Holy Cross ever be the same? Would the fraud of divine right be exposed? Could the monarchy transform itself into an open and accountable entity?

A hopeful sign finally appeared. Two members of the royal court abdicated their powerful positions and renounced their royal titles.

Could this be a harbinger of change? Time would tell.

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