



# A NEW ERA FOR SPAIN FELIPE AND LETIZIA

THE COUNTRY'S GOLDEN COUPLE ARE POISED TO BECOME KING AND QUEEN AS JUAN CARLOS STEPS DOWN



'I know [Felipe] will count on the support that he will always have from Princess Letizia,' said Juan Carlos about his royal heir when announcing his abdication. Here, Felipe and his wife of 10 years step out to a gala dinner at the Royal Palace in 2013.



Spain's King Juan Carlos (above, with Letizia, Felipe and Queen Sofia at a gala dinner in Madrid in 2009) is the third European monarch to step down in the past year. Last April, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands gave the throne to her son Prince Willem-Alexander, and in July King Albert II of Belgium abdicated for health reasons. Like Albert, the Spanish king has had several health problems in recent years. His only son, Prince Felipe, will become king and Princess Letizia his queen.

**'We must be at the service of your country at any hour of any day of the year' - FELIPE**

**A**s King Juan Carlos of Spain made the surprise announcement he was stepping down after 39 years on the throne, there was one comfort to the people of Spain, and it lay with the man who will be filling his shoes, Crown Prince Felipe.

With his wife, Princess Letizia, by his side, Felipe will "open a new era of hope" for Spain, said his father, the 76-year-old king. While the monarch did not mention his health problems (he has had five hip operations in recent years), the reason for his abdication was clear. "A new generation must be at the forefront, younger people with new energies."

Felipe, 46, and Letizia, 41, are clearly the pair for the job. The parents of two – Infanta Leonor of Spain, 8, and Infanta Sofia, 7 – are easily the most beloved members of the country's royal family.

They have been an anchor of unity and good values in a decade marred by economic troubles and rumours of royal corruption. "My son Felipe, the heir to the throne, embodies stability," said Juan Carlos.

In a recent *El Mundo* newspaper poll, Felipe had 66 per cent approval rating over his father's 41 per cent. "Felipe and Letizia are seen as figures who can restore the monarchy to popularity ►





'In the king, I have a father, but also a leader, a friend and a counsellor,' says Felipe of Juan Carlos (below, the pair in 1968). Felipe will no doubt fulfil the same role for his daughter, heiress presumptive Infanta Leonor (here in 2012, with her father and grandfather).



## KING OF HEARTS AND OF HIS FAMILY

after the difficulties in recent years," royal historian Carolyn Harris tells *Hello! Canada*. "They're seen as very approachable. They have two young daughters, so they're seen as engaging more with ordinary Spaniards."

### BORN TO BE

That has been Felipe's way all along. The only son of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia – Felipe has two older sisters, princesses Elena and Cristina, but, according to Spanish succession laws, is the rightful heir – was a happy-go-lucky child who grew into a clever, conscientious and charming young man.

He is well-educated and well-travelled. In high school, the prince did an exchange program at Lakefield College in Peterborough, Ont. After that, he spent three years in the military before going on to obtain a law degree from the Autonomous University of Madrid and a master's of international relations at Georgetown University.

"I like to think of myself as being no different from anybody else," he once told *Hello!* ►



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**'I like to think of myself as being no different from anybody else'**  
- FELIPE

The youngest child of Juan Carlos and Sofia, Felipe (above, with family in 1973, and right in 2010) was exposed to royal occasions from his earliest years. Below: Felipe and his parents host Princes Charles, William, Harry and Princess Diana in 1987. 'I've often been described as being a combination of both my parents.'







## THE NEWS READER NEXT DOOR BECOMES QUEEN

"With my failures, qualities, frustrations, joys, worries, everything, a king should not lose his perception of what it is like to be somebody normal."

As his father's health has deteriorated, Felipe has steadily been taking on more duties. In 2011, he performed some 250 engagements, which more than demonstrate that he is ready for the task ahead. "[Felipe] has the maturity, preparation and sense of responsibility necessary to [become] head of state and open a new era of hope," said Juan Carlos.

Among his favourite public duties is his work with his namesake Prince of Asturias Foundation to promote the arts and culture. Canadian author Margaret Atwood took home the 2008 Prince of Asturias Award for Letters at the annual awards.

Felipe has expertly balanced these pressing royal obligations with his fulfilling personal life. Most mornings, he and Letizia can be seen leaving their home at Zarzuela Palace and walking their daughters to the same school he attended. "I'm a happy man. How could I not be with Letizia and my girls?"

### 'A BREATH OF FRESH AIR'

Letizia hasn't just brought joy to Felipe's life – she is also adored by the people of Spain, who see her as a breath of fresh air. "Her popularity has increased immensely over ►

She's set to be Queen of Spain, but Letizia has held the title of style queen for several years. Often compared to the Duchess of Cambridge, the Spanish princess prefers to champion national designers such as Felipe Varela (left in 2013) and retail labels such as Zara (right, in 2012). Of course, as future queen, she will have her pick of jewels, such as the Prussian Diamond tiara she wore in 2009.



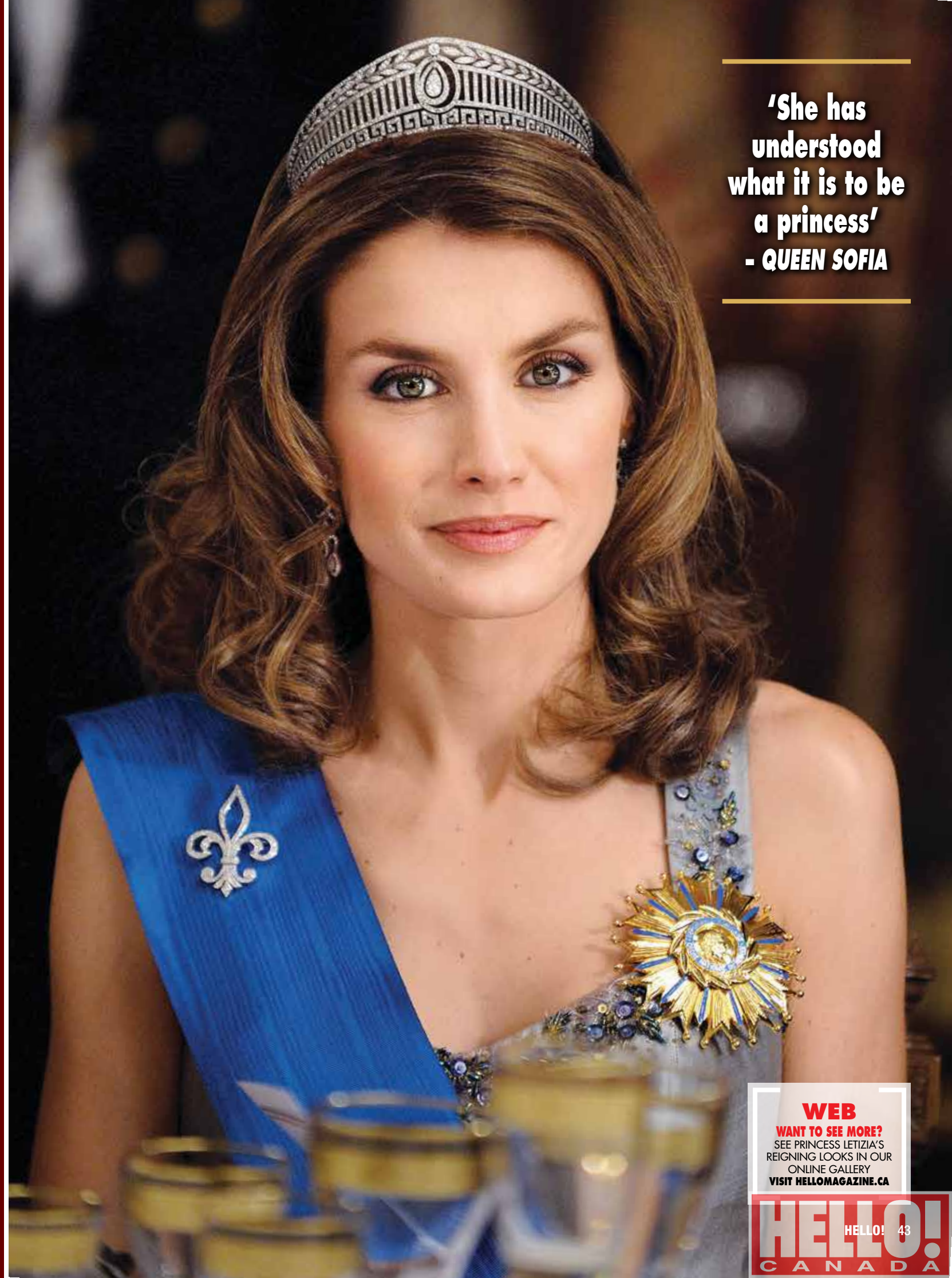
## FROM THE NEWSROOM TO THE PALACE

She went from reading the headlines to making the headlines. Before Letizia Ortiz Rocasolano met her prince, she was a working journalist. She earned a master's degree in audiovisual journalism and went on to work for CNN and Bloomberg services. She covered the 9/11 attack in New York City and was embedded on the front lines during the Iraq war. "She's a typical 21st century young woman," said a royal family spokesperson. "She's independent, serious and knows where she's going."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES; CARLOS ALVAREZ/GETTY IMAGES; ERIC FEFERBERG/APP/GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES

'She has understood what it is to be a princess'  
- QUEEN SOFIA



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Letizia knows how to dress for every occasion. Clockwise from here: in a gown by tried-and-true favourite designer Felipe Varela in 2010; a Varela pantsuit in 2012; and an on-trend floral number in December.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: JOHN PHILLIPS/GETTY IMAGES; MIGUEL BENITEZ/GETTY IMAGES; JULIAN PARKER/GETTY IMAGES; PASCAL LE SEGRETTIN/GETTY IMAGES; EUROPA PRESS/GETTY IMAGES



the course of her marriage," says Carolyn. Raised in the northwest of Spain by a journalist and a nurse, the former TV news anchor is credited in part with rejuvenating the monarchy as well as revolutionizing it: she will be the first queen of Spain to be of non-aristocratic blood. Not that you can tell by her track record. "She's delicate, but she's strong and has an innate sense of duty and service," says her mother-in-law, Queen Sofia. "She has understood and captured, as if by osmosis, what it is to be a princess." It was once thought that Letizia could never be queen. She first met her playboy prince at a dinner party, and they reconnected during an oil tank disaster in northern Spain – Letizia was covering the event for TV and Felipe was there to lend moral support. They fell head over heels, but dated in ►



A future queen must carry off a gown, and Letizia can hold her own. Again in Varela at a 2011 gala ahead of Prince William and Kate's wedding and (with a Maria Nieto hat) at the 2013 inauguration of King Willem Alexander of the Netherlands.



## THE PRINCE MEETS HIS MATCH IN LETIZIA



**'Letizia is the woman with whom I want to share my life' - FELIPE**

secret. The reason? Letizia's previous short-lived marriage to one of her college professors – the Catholic Church frowned upon divorce.

In the end, Felipe stood by his love. "I won't abandon my aim to marry someone I'm in love with, with whom I have an honest, profound relationship," he said. "Letizia is the woman with whom I want to share my life and have a family."

Fortunately, because her marriage was a civil ceremony, the two were allowed to marry in the church. They said "I do" on May 22, 2004, at Cathedral Santa María la Real de la Almudena in Madrid. The bride wore an ivory gown by couture legend Manuel Pertegaz and a sparkling platinum-and-diamond tiara borrowed from her mother-in-law.

Like the Duchess of Cambridge, Letizia has since become a style icon, donning a mixture of designer labels such as Hugo Boss and retail brands such as Zara. She regularly tops best-dressed lists and is rarely without a trusty ►



Following their whirlwind romance, the couple announced their engagement in November 2003 (opposite, inset). They married six months later at the Cathedral Santa María la Real de la Almudena in Madrid. 'To serve Spaniards is the great personal and institutional commitment with which Letizia and I set off on this new stage in our lives,' said Felipe, adding that the couple couldn't wait to start a family. Baby Leonor (above and top left) was born in 2005, and Sofia (left, at her baptism) in 2007.





**'The upbringing of Leonor and Sofia became my priority as princess' - LETIZIA**

pair of high heels – so she can stand tall next to her six-foot-five husband.

In her 10 years as a princess, Letizia has also proved a quick study, living up to her promise to “work with enthusiasm and commitment in the service of the people of Spain.” She has joined Felipe on 1,300 official engagements, travelled with him on some 60 trips and has personally visited with 7,000 of her countrymen.

#### FAMILY FIRST

In the end, Letizia will always be a mother first. “The upbringing of the infantas Leonor and Sofia became my priority as princess,” says the mother of two. An official statement noted that the princess “takes care of her daughters on a

daily basis and tries to juggle her role as mother with her support of Felipe in his public duties.”

That relationship will become even more important now that the couple’s eldest daughter, Leonor, is the heiress presumptive. She’s already well into her training to become Spain’s future queen. She’s studying Mandarin and speaks English with her grandmother Queen Sofia.

Like her father did with King Juan Carlos, she’ll have a good example in her father. “We’re a type of public servant that must be at the service of your country at any hour of any day of the year,” said the prince, who is expected to reign as Felipe VI. “All my life has been directed at that.”

REPORT: CARLI WHITWELL



CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: GETTY IMAGES; S.M. EL REY (3); JAMIE REINA/GETTY IMAGES; S.M. EL REY

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**'I'm a happy man! How could I not be with Letizia and my girls?' - FELIPE**



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The under-the-radar family celebrated Letizia's 40th birthday in September 2012 quietly at home at Zarzuela Palace, but released these photos (opposite). This page: The family on Felipe and Letizia's 10-year anniversary.

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