

KINGSHIP WITH A DIFFERENCE

On the 6th of May 2023, a lot of people in the UK and throughout the world witnessed one of the many “once in a lifetime events” of this century – **The Coronation of King Charles III**. As a fervent traveller who has been to many countries, I can categorically and unapologetically state that no other country does ceremonies and ceremonials better than the English. Their precision is unrivalled, their execution is unequalled, and their timing is unparalleled.

The Coronation of King Charles III moved me profoundly because of its Christological Anchor even though we live in a seemingly more secularised world. Three stages of the Coronation brought out this Christological Anchor so aptly: **The Entrance, The Anointing and The Crowning**. When King Charles arrived the West Gate of Westminster Abbey, and before he could begin the procession into the Abbey, the choir sang Psalm 122 – “I was glad when they said unto me by Charles Hubert Hastings Parry.” This is a powerful Psalm expressing longing for the house of God. When Charles got to his seat and before the ceremony could commence officially, a little boy stood in front of him and said to him: “Your Majesty, as children of the kingdom of God, we welcome you in the name of the King of Kings. King Charles reply was: In His name and after His example, I come not to be served but to serve.” For his ANOINTING, King Charles went for Chrism Oil from the Mont of Olives; it was consecrated in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. During his anointing proper, the choir sang – Zadok the Priest, a hymn remembering the anointing of Solomon by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, after which the people shouted – God save the King and Long live the king. At his CROWNING and before placing the crown on King Charles, Archbishop Justin Welby lifted the crown and prayed: “King of Kings and Lord of Lords, bless we beseech Thee this crown and so sanctify this your servant Charles upon whose head this day it will be placed.” Although the Coronation of King Charles was a worldwide spectacle, the clear message was apparent – King Charles III is participating in a minuscular way in the Kingship of Christ who is the King of the Universe and whose solemnity we celebrate today. However, there is a clear difference between the kingship of King Charles, all the earthly kings and the kingship of Jesus Christ. It is this stark difference that we are exposed to in today’s Sunday readings.

While all earthly kings want to be known for flexing their muscles by stamping their power and authority, the kingship of Christ is centred on looking after and serving the most vulnerable in our society as today’s Gospel pericope from Matthew Chapter 25 enunciates. Christ’ kingship is centred on:

- Giving food to the hungry
- Giving water to the thirsty
- Welcoming the stranger
- Clothing the naked
- Visiting the sick
- Visiting those in prison

Yes, Christ's Kingship is focused on looking after those on the margins of society because they define how wonderful or otherwise a society is. This is exactly what Pope Francis stated on the 10th Anniversary celebration of *Evangelii Gaudium* thus: "In *Evangelii Gaudium* I wanted to show clearly that, called to have the same sentiments as Jesus Christ, our evangelizing mission and our Christian life cannot ignore the poor. The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor.⁶ All of it. From his own mother, the Holy Virgin, a poor girl on the outskirts of a great empire. Jesus Himself who made Himself poor, who was born in a stable among animals and peasants, who grew up among workers and earned His bread with His hands, who surrounded Himself with crowds of the dispossessed, identified with them, put them at the centre of His heart, announced the Good News to them first, who promised them the Kingdom of Heaven and sent us all, missionary disciples, to feed them, to distribute goods justly with them, to defend their cause to the point of clearly indicating to us that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:35ff)." This is equally what the King of the Universe who is also the Great Shepherd of the flock did in today's First Reading from Prophet Ezekiel Chapter 34 – He looked for the lost ones, brought back the strayed banded the wounded and made the weak strong. He equally watched over the sheep that were fat and healthy. Yes, when we look after the weakest and poorest in our society, then there will not be any need for the King of the Universe to separate the sheep from the goats when he comes in his glory nor send anyone to eternal punishment as today's Gospel warns us.

My friends, a lot of saints have written profound of treatises on the readings of today; we have read them but are yet to put them into practice.

- ❖ Of what use is our coming to Mass every day when we cannot help the poor and serve them?
- ❖ Of what use is our praying for 24 hours when we are in enmity with our family members?
- ❖ Of what use is our undertaking all the penances in this world when our hearts are full of anger, hatred, and division against fellow parishioners?
- ❖ Of what use is our strict Rules of Life, Piety, and Spirituality when we cannot welcome and accommodate the opinions of others?

In his homily at the Coronation of King Charles III, Archbishop Justin Welby said: **"Service is love in action. We see active love in our care of the most vulnerable... Each of us is called by God to serve. Each of us today can choose God's way of serving the poor and the weak."** If we cannot love and serve the King of the Universe in Poverty, how can we claim to serve Him in Majesty??? Christ' Kingdom which is an eternal and universal, is a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace. Let us start now to work for its actualisation.

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Homily for the Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe, Year A (26/11/2023)