

Weekly Message from Fr William for the Fifth Sunday of Easter 2023

Dear People of St Mary's, within our diversity of views about the monarchy, and King Charles in particular, one thing we observe is his attitude to other faiths. He has from the basis of his own Christian faith taken an active interest in the faith of others, not just in the different traditions of the Christian faith, but in the faith of the other religions represented in our multireligious society.

Indarjit Singh, a British journalist, active in Sikh and interfaith activities, presented a gauntlet to the king at a particular point in the coronation service. He was among the first non Christians ever to have taken part in a coronation service. There were representatives from different religions each having similar roles, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew and himself a Sikh, each presenting the king with a particular gift. It's a gesture Indarjit Singh likened to the Magi coming from their different religions to the infant Jesus, demonstrating interreligious respect.

In our own ecumenical service this Sunday, following the coronation service itself, the different churches are contributing different elements. The Anglican team will be starting us off with a short address and opening prayers. The children of St John's Primary School will then sing a song newly composed for the occasion, called Sing for the King. Leaders from Gracious Street Methodist Church will then lead us in prayer.

This will be followed by that wonderful prayer of St Paul recorded in his Letter to Ephesians and read by the Mayor of Knaresborough, Kathryn Davies. In this prayer Paul prays that the Father, out of his infinite glory, may give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God. It's a particularly fitting prayer to make on this day for the king.

After this St Mary's will be leading the psalm. This is taken from Psalm 72, sung to God, that sings of the blessings that a king might bring to his people – justice, peace, defence of the poor, the needy, the helpless, freedom from oppression, abundance of the necessities of life, and the flourishing of his people.

The words of Jesus, recorded in Luke's Gospel, will then be read by the United Reformed Church, reminding us that those entrusted with authority are called to serve, just as he himself came to serve. I think each of the town clergy are then to share their reflections on our understanding of kingship, followed by the whole ecumenical congregation praying together, and ending with the national anthem.

We had a big turnout from St Mary's at the ecumenical service for last year's Platinum Jubilee. I hope you can make it to this one. 10.30am this Sunday in St John's Church.

*William*

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 7 May 2023