



5th Week of Easter 7th/8th May 2023 – Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh

“You are a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called us out of darkness into his own wonderful light” (1 Peter 2)

I have been conscious as I’ve considered my Reflection for the coming 5th Week of Easter of the momentous occasion we are preparing for on Saturday 6th May, the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III. In a post for the occasion Archimandrite (Abuna) Shafiq Abouzayd who ministers to the Melkite Community in the Diocese, particularly in the Oxford area, reminds us that King Charles in his first address to our countries after the death of the Queen stated, in the context of the late Queen’s unwavering service, “that promise of lifelong service I renew to you all today”. Cardinal Nichols has encouraged Catholics to join the Bishops of England and Wales in 3 days of prayer Wednesday 3 May to Friday 5th May for His Majesty and the Queen. He said *“May God Bless his Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen Consort, preserve them both in health of mind and body and grant them every grace and blessing now and for the years to come”*.

Pope Francis has gifted a relic of the True Cross to His Majesty King Charles III. It will be incorporated into the newly made Cross of Wales which will lead the Coronation procession at Westminster Abbey on Saturday, 6 May. Bishop Mark O’Toole, Archbishop of Cardiff and Bishop of Menevia, said: *“It is not only a sign of the deep Christian roots of our nation but will, I am sure, encourage us all to model our lives in the love given by our Saviour, Jesus Christ”*. The cross is marked by words (in Welsh) from the final sermon of St David: “Be joyful. Keep the Faith. Do the little things”. The Cross, which will be received by the Church in Wales, will be shared between the Anglican and Catholic Churches in Wales.

The anointing of King Charles has received a lot of attention in the media; the oil has come from the Mount of Olives and has been consecrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by the Orthodox Patriarch. The anointing with chrism is a sacred moment: it is an outward symbol that God has chosen and set apart the person for a specific holy purpose. In the case of King Charles and the Consort Queen Camilla it is a bonding to God and a seeking of His Blessing.

In The Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation in the Catholic Church, we are familiar with this action of the Priest and Bishop. It is in that context that I read the words of St Peter in the 2nd Reading for the 5th Sunday of Easter: *“You are a consecrated nation, a*

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people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of darkness into His own wonderful light”.

This past week Pope Francis was in Hungary whose first King was St Stephen. He quoted the Saint in his opening address to the Diplomatic Core and Civil Society. He said “those who profess themselves Christian, in the company of the witnesses of Faith, are called to bear witness to and to join forces with everyone in cultivating a humanism inspired by the Gospel and moving along two fundamental tracks: acknowledging ourselves to be beloved children of the Father and loving one another as brothers and sisters”. In this regard, the Pope continued “St Stephen bequeathed to his son extraordinary words of fraternity when he told him that those who arrive with different languages and customs ‘adorn the country”.

King Charles has already shown himself to be a bridge builder, seeking to reach out to other Faiths and Denominations while being a “Defender of the [Anglican Christian] Faith”. It is especially in his role as a Christian King, who seeks to draw all peoples, all Faiths together, that we can all see ourselves praying for him and pledging loyalty to him. The suggestion that we pledge “allegiance” to the King has been a bit controversial; if it is spelt out in terms of his role as a unifier and symbol of many nations working together in harmony and mutual respect, while not denying our own Faith, our own belief, we will join him in his challenging service to the UK and the Commonwealth, and the wider world.

This coming weekend we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima. The Cannonisation of Francisco and Jacinta Marto aged 9 and 10 by Pope Francis in 2017 reminds us that being faithful in the little things can lead to great holiness, to great joy, and bring others much happiness. The world is a better place where all live out that call to holiness just where they are. When we pray for our King and Queen we pray for our nation to be a people of hope and joy.

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