

The Coronation



Jesus said, 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant...' Matthew 20:26

As we come together within our village communities this month to celebrate the momentous historic occasion of the crowning of King Charles III it is worth reminding ourselves of the purpose of our Head of State.

From biblical times, monarchy has always been viewed as functioning best when the Crown has served as a focus for national unity. We live in a diverse country - multifaith, multicultural and multilingual. In recent decades we have learnt, rightly, to celebrate our differences with mutual respect and patient tolerance. We have increasingly come to acknowledge that as a nation we are a community of communities, each with an identity of its own, celebrating traditions both religious and secular that act as reference points in keeping alive different histories and different ways of being. 'Difference' is not something restricted to large urban conurbations and cities but is often profoundly and quite intensely apparent in small rural communities often with the local parish church being the focus for loyalty. *"This is our Village and our Church. And the Bishop can think what he likes but we are not going to travel to any other*

church or village for worship.” Such is a common expression of upholding difference as an important trait of local identity.

Alongside celebrating difference, nation states and their economies flourish where a certain amount of competition is encouraged. Meritocracy promotes those who can over those who can't. Everyone benefits when those with skills step forward and take up the challenge to move things onwards. This helps to regulate the marketplace. It also helps with providing necessary facilities for everyone and promotes the common good. I use the gifts and skills that God has given me. You use the gifts and skills that God has given you. Competition brings to the fore those best able to lead us into the future. Sadly, these utopian ideals highlight that many have little access to shine and many of those who do so seem to fall by the wayside having compromised their own integrity.

Difference and competition bring both joys and exhilaration, but also stresses and strains that pull and jostle peoples who live alongside each other as a nation. It is in this mix that we are blessed with a modern-day constitutional monarchy whose task it is to hold together when sometimes it seems the emphasis is all on pulling us apart. This is a servant role, determined not by the King but by his subjects. It is a difficult task, requiring much wisdom and very careful judgement. Yet the benefits are great. It means we can stand shoulder to shoulder, whoever we are, wherever we live, in this United Kingdom.

God Bless and Save the King. And God Bless You.

Revd Mark Bailey