

**Sermon on the Occasion of the Coronation of King Charles III
Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
May 7, 2023**

Dear Friends,

Today we gather to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III, the new Monarch of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. We pray for the new King as he begins his reign and we reflect on our relationship, as Canadians, with the Monarchy in the 21st century. The Monarchy, and its history with Canada, are not without controversy. Some in today's society see it as a vital link to the past. In contrast, others question the role of the Crown, particularly with its links to colonialism.

As Anglicans, we offer daily Prayer, including prayers for the Royal Family. One of the titles and responsibilities of the Monarch is Defender of the Faith, a title that goes back to the reign of King Henry the 8th as the Supreme Governor of the Established Church of England. While some may think this is a role that implies the supremacy and exclusivity of Christianity, the reality is perhaps otherwise and far more inclusive.

At her Diamond Jubilee in 2012, Queen Elizabeth II delivered an important speech explaining the role of being the Defender of the Faith in a multi-faith society.

She said: **“The concept of our established Church is occasionally misunderstood and, I believe, commonly under-appreciated. Its role is not to defend Anglicanism to the exclusion of other religions. Instead, the Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country.”**

It was heartening that in his first address to the Commonwealth on his ascension to the throne, His Majesty the King said: **“The role and the duties of Monarchy also remain, as does the Sovereign's particular**

relationship and responsibility towards the Church of England - the Church in which my own faith is so deeply rooted.”

“In that faith, and the values it inspires, I have been brought up to cherish a sense of duty to others and to hold in the greatest respect the precious traditions, freedoms and responsibilities....”

Yesterday, King Charles promised: **“In Christ’s name, and after his example, I come not to be served, but to serve.”**

What does this mean, and to what has King Charles pledged?

For Christians, our example is the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught those who wish to follow him that our own way of living together in great diversity and difference is to follow the simple command, **“Love one another.”**

Christian love is a commitment to serve and respect one another regardless of our differences. Jesus encountered many people who were different from him, and he looked deep beneath the surface of the person and saw - with radical compassion - the needs of the human heart. Those needs are universal: the need for inclusion and acceptance, the need for justice and equality, and the need for love.

As Christ himself said: **“ My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this; To lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends.”** (John 15).

It is certainly a comfort to know that this is the example King Charles promised: **“not to be served, but to serve.”**

Reflecting upon the role of the British Monarchy in the 21st century recalls the long and complex history of the British colonial empire. As

Canadians, we are deeply aware that the relationship between the Monarchy and indigenous peoples has been fraught with tension and conflict.

Many indigenous and non-indigenous people in Canada view the British Monarchy as a symbol of colonialism and oppression due to the role of the British in the colonization of indigenous lands, which has had a devastating impact on indigenous communities. As Anglicans, our history is as a colonizing Church, which has played a tragic and horrific role in the cultural genocide of indigenous lives and communities through the residential school system in Canada. We, as a church, have committed to walk alongside our indigenous relatives on the path of reconciliation - a journey of not just words but, as some have called it - the way of **Reconciliation ACTION**.

The British Monarchy, too, has engaged in reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada. Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, publicly acknowledged the harm done to indigenous communities and has expressed support for efforts to address the ongoing legacy of colonialism in Canada.

Very recently, when he was Prince of Wales, King Charles visited our province and met with Indigenous leaders. Like Her Late Majesty, the King acknowledged the “**darker and more difficult aspects of the past.**” He committed himself to finding new ways to come to terms with our past. A few days before his Coronation, Indigenous elders and leaders from Canada met with the King at Buckingham Palace to discuss treaty relationships with the Crown, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Residential Schools, and the repatriation of Indigenous Cultural artifacts. This is indeed a good and vital step on the path of justice and reconciliation.

Ultimately, the relationship between the British Monarchy and indigenous peoples in Canada is complex and multifaceted. It is vital for us all to educate ourselves on the history and efforts to support policies and

practices that promote reconciliation and healing in a respectful and honest dialogue.

King Charles has also demonstrated servant leadership in other ways, especially by highlighting the importance of the climate emergency we face. Throughout the years, he has warned about the destructive processes that harm the planet while implementing sustainable, organic practices in his residences. In the mid-1970s, when he was His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, he established the Prince's Trust, a charitable organization dedicated to improving the lives of disadvantaged young people in the UK, which has since helped over 1,000,000 young people move into education, employment or training. While we may never be able to help a million people, all of us can do our own part, but starting with at least one person.

As Jesus said, **“My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this; To lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”**

As we stand at the beginning of this new era in the British Monarchy, let us pray for God’s grace and guidance to be with King Charles. May his reign be marked by wisdom, justice, compassion, and reconciliation. May his Monarchy bring glory to God and bring dignity to every person. And may we remember that although he is a King - he is still human and, like all of us, is not perfect. And may we, regardless of our position in life, serve alongside King Charles in the examples of friendship, servanthood, and love set for us by the King of Kings, Jesus Christ our Lord who has reconciled the whole of Creation with our Heavenly Father.

In that spirit, and with our deepest prayers, may we join with others as we pray, **“God save the King!”**

-Bishop Sam Rose