

VIEW FROM THE HEIGHTS

May 2023

Greetings,

May 6th is Coronation Day! As I will be glued to the telly all morning, I hope that the Spirit inspires Sunday's sermon early in the week!

Royal events in Britain are a combination of pageantry and piety. And I enjoy both aspects. I particularly love the traditional hymns that were part of daily worship in school. During Queen Elizabeth's funeral, I sang along, using my old school hymnal (5 font!) as a prompt.

Today, State occasions in the UK include representatives from many faith traditions. Thankfully! The days when a Catholic could be executed, a Baptist minister imprisoned, or a Jewish person expelled for causing the plague are long over. We have learnt – painfully slowly – that God welcomes and affirms all sincere pathways to the Holy.

One special coronation gift highlights Christianity's growing inclusiveness. Pope Francis has given King Charles a relic of Christ's Cross to be incorporated into the coronation cross. The ceremonial "Cross of Wales", made of recycled silver bullion, has an embedded glass reliquary to hold the precious wood.

I confess to being a sceptic when it comes to relics. But scientifically documented authenticity is not their point. Religious artifacts are a source of comfort, hope, and inspiration to multitudes. Therefore, they are holy.

To gift an object of such holiness is a deep kindness. To incorporate it into a ceremony replete with ancient regal traditions is equally meaningful. The secretary of the Vatican nunciature in London stated that,

"In a significant ecumenical gesture, the Cross of Wales will incorporate a relic of the true cross, the personal gift of Pope Francis to His Majesty the King to mark the coronation."

Well done, Francis! Well done, Charles! That is exactly the sort of neighbourly love, Jesus encouraged.

Imagine my surprise, then, when I received a text entitled, "Pope Betrays Christ to Woke King." Oh my! The author of the screed is offended by Charles' commitment to furthering interfaith relationships. He defines it as a "desecration"! ⁱⁱ

Jesus welcomed the assistance of a Samaritan woman and praised the faith of an occupying Roman soldier. If Matthew is to be believed, Babylonian astronomers were his first worshippers. Neither Christ nor God are offended by the embrace of other faiths. It is we humans who struggle with the concept!

We want our religious beliefs to be correct. Absolutely 100% correct! If God endorsed our faith tradition and rejected all others, that would make us VERY special!
But not really...

The author of 1 John wrote:

*"Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love."*ⁱⁱⁱ

Well done, Francis! Well done, Charles!

Wishing you a multitude of diverse blessings,
Brenda

ⁱ National Catholic Reporter, April 19th, 2023

ⁱⁱ Jules Gomes, "Rome Dispatch", April 20th

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 John 4: 7-8, Common English Bible