**3rd June 2012 Diamond Jubilee Celebrations**

**Isaiah 6.1-8, Romans 8.12-17**

Can you imagine doing a job for 60 years! Actually, the way many of our pensions are going perhaps you can!

This weekend the nation pays tribute to the Queen who has held down a job that she didn’t have to interview for, nor was she elected to, but a job which she has performed to universal appreciation. Her tact and judgement, her service and dignity have even brought admiration from the republicans among us – and I know there are some in this church! She has been a symbol of continuity and stability. She has been a figurehead for national unity partly because she is so non-expressive it is difficult to know what she truly thinks. From having to sing Auld Lang Syne with Cherie Blair, to being portrayed by Helen Mirren in a Hollywood movie in the aftermath of Princess Diana’s tragic death, the Queen has kept tight lipped. Because we don’t know what she is feeling or thinking – we can’t disagree with her. Her reserve and constraint has been admirable.

At the age of 21 she expressed her desire to serve her country:

She gave a radio broadcast in which she said:

“There is a motto which has been borne by many of my ancestors – a noble motto, ‘I serve.’

Those words were an inspiration to many bygone heirs to the throne.

I can make my solemn act of dedication with a whole Empire listening. I should like to make that dedication now; it is very simple.

I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great Imperial family, to which we all belong, but I shall not have the strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me, as I now invite you to do. I know that your support will be unfailingly given.

God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.

Her Christian faith has been exemplary and she has not been afraid to declare it and encourage others to embrace it. We are not sure about those who will follow her.

Our two bible readings for today, Trinity Sunday, reflect on our position before God and our call into his service. I want to use the Coronation Service in dialogue with these two readings to reflect on our position before God and our role in his service.

In our passage from Isaiah, Uzziah became king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, when he was only sixteen years old, (our Queen was 25 years old when she came to the throne). According to 2 Chronicles (26:1–5, 16–21) did what was right in the sight of God. In other words he was a pretty good King.

It has to be said from the outset that God did not want Kings. If you have been reading through the Bible in a Year with Nicky Gumbels blogs – you will have read through the first book of Samuel recently in which the Israelites ask God for their first King. God says in 1 Samuel 8, you want a king because you want to reject me. If you make a man a king he will take your sons and make them serve him, he will take the best of your vineyards and farmlands and a tenth of your grain – in other words the monarchy will establish a hierarchy – which is OK for those at the top- but the mass of you will be at the bottom. God says I’m not happy about that. But the Israelites say we want a King so we can be like the other nations. God gives them a king. I think God is a republican! It is a little ironic therefore that we ask God to save our Queen and bless our monarchy!

Uzziah the king of Israel prospered and became a popular and well-liked sovereign and reigned for forty years as a powerful military leader. Only King Solomon’s reign was considered more glorious than Uzziah’s. There are some good Kings. But Uzziah became proud, so proud that he felt that he had the right to enter the temple to offer incense to God, even though only priests descended from Aaron were allowed to make such offerings. The priest Azariah confronts Uzziah saying, “Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong.” Uzziah protests in rage, but immediately contracts leprosy, and from that day until the day of his death in the year 742 BCE, he never again enters the temple. We all make mistakes, even royalty.

King Uzziah’s death inaugurates the call of Isaiah of Jerusalem. The death of one monarch who was forbidden to enter the temple leads Isaiah to the recognition of another monarch – God – the hem of whose robe fills the temple, who sits on a throne, in the holy of holies, surrounded by strange multi- winged creatures the Seraphim,. Smoke fills the temple, revealing the divine presence, yet smoke also conceals. God is thus both veiled from and revealed to Isaiah: he sees that just as the hem of God’s robe fills the temple, and smoke fills the whole house, God’s glory fills the whole earth.

We can be taken up by the majesty and pomp of royal occasions – it can fill the masses with awe and give the monarch a certain mystique. How much more should our faith make us in awe of the God who is creator of all, the mysterious trinity revealed to us as Father Son and Holy Spirit. Sometimes we need to gasp and wonder at the mystery of all that we know and believe.

Isaiah, overwhelmed by this experience of a deity, confesses his sin, his unclean lips, which the seraphim purify.

At a Coronation three swords are carried un-sheathed, point upwards. They are the Sword of Mercy (the Curtana), the Sword of Spiritual Justice and the Sword of Temporal Justice, they were all probably made for Charles 1.

Sword of Mercy (the Curtana)

The blunt end – blade broken 6 inches from the bottom, is to symbolise mercy. It is associated with the legend of Ogier the Dane who, in revenge for the murder of his son, was about to strike down the son of the Emperor Charlemagne, when an angel and struck his

sword aside, breaking the end of it and saying ‘Mercy is better then revenge’.

Then there is the Sword of Spiritual Justice

‘Running wolf’mark on blade. This sword also has a blunt end.

Sword of Temporal Justice

‘Running wolf’ mark on blade

The above two swords signify the Sovereign’s relationship to the clergy and laity.

Biblically, the sword is a picture of the word of God but it is also an instrument of war and judgement. During the ceremony the Queen is given this sword in her right hand and the Archbishop says, ‘ With this sword, do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the Church, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay….’ God gives that commission to us his servants too. That is the gospel call on our lives.

Isaiah hears God’s question, God’s call, “Whom shall I send?” and immediately he volunteers himself: “Here am I, send me.” It should be noted that Isaiah is not commissioned for a pleasant task, but to prophesy to a people who cannot understand his warnings, a people of dull minds and stopped ears and shut eyes. Such is the anguish of the prophet: to tell the truth, not to be believed, and yet continue to speak God’s truth.

I would not wish the queen’s job on my worst enemy. , I think she has a hard time of it yet she has served with great diligence and humility. At key times in her life the Queen has made vows/promises. Promises to serve her people, to be wedded to the nation.

What promises have we made in our lives? How important are these promises?

How often are they kept?

Can you trust someone who breaks their promise?

I was doing a wedding yesterday – of Michele Everett’s daughter Verity. Michele is the church secretary at our sister church in Sharpness. I drew a comparison to the Queen’s promises and to the promises made in a wedding ceremony. Trust, of course, can be broken in relationships.

Rob Parsons, from Care for the Family, tells of how he was speaking at a seminar on marriage and at the end of the seminar a young couple waited patiently to speak with him. They held back until they were sure the auditorium was empty and then he told me his story. He had had an affair the year before. He said, ‘I told my wife what I had done, and asked for her forgiveness. I took off my wedding ring and said ‘don’t put that back on my finger until you can trust me again.’ And then he smiled, lifted his hand and said’ last month she put it back on my finger’. He was relieved, but I turned to see how she was reacting. Her head was bowed. I said to him ‘forgive me if I’m wrong, but I think when she put that ring back on your finger she was not saying, ‘I trust you again.’ She was saying, ‘with all my heart I want to trust you again?’

She raised her head and said ‘that’s how I feel’. Parsons comments that it will take time for this coupe to rebuild trust again, but they have begun. What would have festered and grown like a cancer in secret is dealt with. And we need forgiveness like that not just in the big issues, but in the small everyday hurts that affect every relationship. Forgiveness feels pain but doesn’t hoard it; it allows tomorrow to break free of yesterday. It is always hard, sometimes foolish and, at its heart, God like there is no hope for us without it.

In the Romans passage Paul speaks about how the Spirit adopts us – frees us and reassures us that we are children of God. He has spent the last seven chapters telling us we are sinners – but this is the good news – God loves us and by his Spirit gives us the assurance we are his – there is no condemnation.

The Queen is anointed for service. Look at anointing in the Old Testament: anointing was always for a specific person and for a particular role e.g. Prophets (1 Kings 19:16), Priests (Exodus 40:13) or Kings (1 Samuel 16:13).

This Old Testament principle flowed into the New Testament, where an anointing for service was extended to all of Jesus’ followers. Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2) was fulfilled in Acts as we discovered last week at Pentecost. God’s anointing – the Holy Spirit – falls on every generation, young and old, sons and daughters… so ordinary people such as you and I can have the Holy Spirit at work in our lives to give us the power to serve in today’s world.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus explains what it means to be anointed to serve: the power of the Holy Spirit has been given to us to enable us to fulfil Jesus’ ministry to the ends of the earth. As Christians, we have received the Holy Spirit so that we can live in the power of the Holy Spirit: righteousness, joy, peace and hope for our broken world all

overflow from this anointing (Romans 14:17 and 15:13).

So, to receive the anointing, by faith we need to acknowledge the sacrifice Jesus has made on the cross for our sins. We then have the privilege of the indwelling Holy Spirit enabling us to live out Jesus’ ministry in Christian service.

In conclusion, and application, we are ordinary people, but we make promises and choices that change our lives. When we choose to follow Jesus and acknowledge him as Lord we receive his Spirit and we are anointed for an extra-ordinary ministry that we receive by faith, in simple trust. As a result we know the joy, power and presence of the Holy Spirit overflowing from our lives. That is reason enough to rejoice - to fly the flag and get out the bunting.

This weekend is special for our nation – celebrate the Queens’ Diamond Jubilee

**Coronations are** solemn and beautiful ceremonies which have deep meanings. In discovering its full meaning, remember that behind the things that are seen and which will pass away are the things that

are unseen and eternal. The Coronation is sometimes called ‘the Hallowing’ – a word which means to make holy or to

consecrate. The Sovereign’s office is both sacred and civil and so the Coronation is an act of dedication and consecration.

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The Coronation service has changed little since the coronation of King Edgar in 973. It has four parts; Recognition, the Oath, the Investiture and the Homage.

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**The Recognition**

The Recognition is the formal recognition of the right of the Sovereign to rule. The coronation ceremony begins with this. The Queen is presented to each side of the congregation by the

archbishop, who asks them if they will do her homage and service. They shout back ‘God save Queen Elizabeth’ – the people have approved their Queen. Then trumpets sound and the Sovereign is seated in the Chair of State.

**The Oath**

In the Oath the Queen swears to govern her peoples according to their respective laws and customs, and to preserve true religion.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, (Dr Geoffrey Fisher) administers the Coronation Oath asking the Queen whether she will lawfully govern and maintain the protestant religion, saying

‘Madam, is your Majesty willing to take the Oath’? The Queen answers ‘I am willing’. She then signs The Oath. At this point the head of the Church of Scotland presented the Holy Bible.

She kneeled and laying her hand on the Bible opened at John Chapter 1 said, ‘The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep. So help me God’. She then kissed the book.

On returning to her chair, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland presented a Bible to her saying ‘This is the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom; this is the royal law; these are the lively oracles of God’.

The Coronation now proceeds within the context of a Communion Service.

**The Anointing**

The Anointing with holy oil is a sacrament by which the Queen is consecrated to be God’s ‘anointed servant’. Only then can she receive the ‘emblems of majesty’. It is the spiritual climax of the coronation.

The Queen, divested of her crimson robe and wearing a very plain white dress, walks to the altar. As she sits in King Edward’s Chair, **four knights hold over her a rich canopy of ‘cloth of gold’**. The Dean takes the Ampulla (an Eagle shaped vessel) and spoon from the altar, pouring oil into the spoon. This holy anointing oil is made to a formula devised by Charles 1.

The Queen kneels as the archbishop a**noints her on the palms of both hands, chest and head, a**s the Ampulla is held by the Dean of Westminster.

As her trust is a sacred one, her first responsibility is to God. She is set apart or consecrated by this Act of Anointing with the words ‘as kings, priests and prophets were anointed’.

**The Investiture**

Here the Sovereign is invested with the royal robes and insignia, the most notable of which is the crown. She is robed with the white linen Colobium Sindonis and over this **the Supertunica of Cloth of Gold, a** close fitting coat. She again sits on King Edward’s chair which has been used by all the sovereign’s of England since Edward I except Mary I and Mary II.

The golden spurs of chivalry are touched by the Queen and the **Sword of State is replaced by the Sovereign’s Sword (the Jewelled Sword of State), which the archbishop lays on the altar**.

On her wrists are put the **Armills**, ‘Bracelets of sincerity and wisdom’ – tokens of the Lord’s protection and symbols of the bond which unites her with her people.

After he has prayed, he gives the Queen the **sword in her right hand** and says ‘with this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the Holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order: that doing these things you may be glorious in all virtue….’. **The Queen then rises, places the sword in**

**its scabbard on the altar, offering it in God’s service**. (It is then redeemed for 100 shillings).

***Swords***

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***Sword of Mercy (the Curtana)***

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*sword aside, breaking the end of it and saying ‘Mercy is better then revenge’.*

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**The Queen is now invested with the Royal Robe (o**r Imperial Robe) and Stole Royal and when she is seated again, t**he orb surmounted by the cross is placed in her right hand**. As she takes it in her hand the archbishop said ‘And when you see this Orb under the cross remember that the whole world is subject to the power and empire of Christ our Redeemer’.

After this the **Queen’s Ring in which is set a sapphire surmounted with a ruby cross – the Wedding Ring of England** – is placed on the fourth finger of the Queen’s right hand to indicate her being wedded to her people.

She then **puts on a glove** and the Royal Sceptre with the Cross, the emblem of justice and kingly power/authority, is placed in her right hand and the Rod with the Dove in her left, the sign that equity and mercy are never to be forgotten.

**The Crowning**

The Crowning is the spectacular climax of the Investing. With the Queen seated on King Edward’s Chair the King Edward’s Crown is taken from the altar by the archbishop. **There is complete silence as he raises the crown high in the air and then lowers it reverently onto the head of the Queen.**

The **congregation then shout ‘God save the Queen’ three times** and peers put on their coronets.

The archbishop, declares; ‘God crown you with a crown of glory and righteousness, that having a right faith and manifold fruit of good works you may obtain the crown of an everlasting kingdom by the gift of Him whose kingdom endureth for ever’.

At this moment bells peel, trumpets sound and guns at The Tower fire a salute.

**The Enthroning and the Homage**

The Queen now sits upon a throne placed on a raised platform, bringing her into the full view of the assembled company for the first time. Here she receives the homage (the Oath of Fealty), of the Lords Spiritual (the bishops and archbishops), the Lords Temporal (Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Viscounts, and Barons), and the congregation - representing the people of the realm. **They come and kneel before her saying, ‘ I do become your liege man of life and**

**limb….’.**

The communion service resumes and the Queen receives the bread and the wine.

She then goes back to her throne and is given once more King Edwards crown, the sceptre and the rod. As she proceeds to King Edward’s chapel, four swords are carried before her. In St.

Edward’s chapel the sceptre with the dove the golden spurs and St. Edward’s staff are laid on the altar. The Queen assumes her robe of purple velvet. She now wears the Imperial Crown and carries the orb in her left hand and the sceptre with the cross in her right as she leaves the Abbey.

**The Diamond Jubilee Prayer**

The prayer written at the Queen's direction by the Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral for

Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee for adults will be used in the Jubilee Thanksgiving

Service in St Paul's Cathedral on Tuesday, 5 June. The Archbishops of Canterbury

and York have commended it for use throughout the Church of England and other

churches are also welcome to use it.

*God of time and eternity,*

*whose Son reigns as servant, not master;*

*we give you thanks and praise*

*that you have blessed this Nation, the Realms and Territories*

*with ELIZABETH,*

*our beloved and glorious Queen.*

*In this year of Jubilee,*

*grant her your gifts of love and joy and peace*

*as she continues in faithful obedience to you, her Lord and God*

*and in devoted service to her lands and peoples,*

*and those of the Commonwealth,*

*now and all the days of her life;*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

**1** Closing words of George VI Christmas speech 1939

A New Year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring…. In the meantime I feel that we may

all find a message of encouragement in my closing words. I would like to say to you:

***I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year; Give me a light that I may tread***

***safely into the unknown. And he replied: Go out into the darkness, and put your hand***

***into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.***

May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all.