

Voice from the Curatage – 22nd September, 2022

Hello there!

I write, today, on the National Day of Mourning for The Late Queen, set aside as a one-time public holiday by the Federal Government. Today will mark the end of a nearly two-week period of public mourning, following the death of the late Sovereign. I imagine that many of us tuned in on Monday evening to watch (and participate in) the funeral service held at Westminster Abbey – and, if you stayed up late enough, the committal service at St George's Chapel, Windsor. On the one hand, this extraordinary service displayed the full gamut of royal pomp and pageantry; the many hours of military processions and wonderfully peculiar historic state customs, alone, bore witness to this. On the other hand, however, and with the (appropriate) grandeur put to one side, we saw a service which was – at its core, liturgically – a pretty straightforward Book of Common Prayer rite for the Burial of the Dead. At the heart of this extraordinary service lay what is, in reality, a rather ordinary service – an understated and dignified funeral rite that has been used to bury countless Anglicans over the past 450-odd years, 'prince and pauper' alike. How extraordinary to know, then, that this (liturgically-speaking, and at its core) 'run-of-the-mill', commonplace – and yet nonetheless beautiful and profound – service was watched live by more than four billion people around the world. (And that's by the most conservative estimates)! Even more extraordinarily, however, is the fact – arising from these statistics – that this was the single largest audience in history ever to see the Lord worshipped and hear the gospel preached, at the one time.



Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, preaches at the funeral service at Westminster Abbey

What a powerful thought it is that, at the same time, more than half of the world's population joined in with – or even just heard – the Lord's Prayer. More than half of the world's population saw what it looks like to respond to death in the Christian hope of the resurrection. More than half of the world's population witnessed even those at the highest levels of earthly power recognising the provisionality of their authority, and joining together with the people as subjects (ultimately) of God, whose majesty – unlike those to whom the title is bestowed here on earth – is everlasting. (This was, to me, beautifully displayed in The Late Queen's choice of final hymn at the service, which ends with the words: "till we

cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.") Let us give thanks to God for the extraordinary opportunity afforded by this service to proclaim his gospel to the world. And let us give thanks, too, for that this gospel formed the bedrock of Her Late Majesty's seventy-year reign.



The symbols of monarchical office (Crown, Orb, and Sceptre), which were taken from the altar and presented to Her Late Majesty at her Coronation, are here returned to the altar during the committal service, before her body is lowered for burial into the Royal Vault.

And how about the goings-on at Christ Church?

Those who have been to the church, recently, might have seen the fantastic developments that have been happening to the extension to the Parish House. We hope to have this work completed within the coming months, and look forward to being able to use this new, larger, and renovated space for a whole host of parish events and activities, services of worship, and outreach initiatives. Please keep praying for these important building works, that they may be completed on time and without any unnecessary hiccoughs!



And finally...

Our dear Bishop Lindsay returns from the Oratory general chapter and retreat on Saturday. Please pray travel mercies for him in the long trip back from Canada. Do also keep Fr Russell and his family in prayer as they continue to enjoy a period of holiday in England. And, of your charity, please pray for me as I prepare to receive the gift of ordination to the sacred priesthood, next Thursday. I will be on retreat from Monday, and hope to see many of you on the evening of the 29th! Thank you so much for the support already shown to me – I can't tell you all just how much it means.

With love from the Curatage,
Deacon Jack