

REQUIEM MASS FOR HM THE QUEEN ST CHAD'S CATHEDRAL – 18 SEPTEMBER 2022

The man who can be trusted in little things can be trusted in great.

As these days of national mourning draw to a close the people of our entire nation are preparing in their different ways for tomorrow's State Funeral for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In every Catholic Church Masses and prayers are being offered today for the late Queen. In our Mass this morning we are united in prayer with Christians across Great Britain and Ireland, and beyond, in thanking God for the witness of Queen Elizabeth's abiding faith in Christ.

People of different faiths in this city and across the world are grateful for the life of service that the late Queen based on the teachings of our Lord – and people who have no particular faith have been touched by something deeper than themselves that they have been witnessing in the moving reaction and response to the Queen's death.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been queuing for many hours to file past the catafalque bearing the Queen's coffin, to pay their respects to her memory and to pray for the repose of her soul. Many have bowed or curtsied silently, while others have made the sign of the cross - reminding us of Christ's sacrifice and the eternal life that flows from the cross of Jesus.

Some commentators have likened the long queues along the Thames embankment to a procession of pilgrims – and there are some similarities, for the journey of many hours fosters a sense of companionship and a common purpose that unites people of different backgrounds and interests. This was undoubtedly one of the late Queen Elizabeth's gifts, drawing people of different faiths, cultures or political convictions together, within the United Kingdom or across the Commonwealth.

But tomorrow our focus will be on an ancient place of pilgrimage - in Westminster Abbey, where the Queen's funeral will take place, close to the tomb and shrine of St Edward the Confessor. This evokes for us the memory of the State Visit of Pope Benedict in 2010, a few days after he had been received by the Queen in Edinburgh and shortly before his historic visit to Birmingham to beatify Cardinal Newman. On that occasion Pope Benedict went with Archbishop Justin Welby to pray and to offer incense together at the tomb of the Confessor.

We recall that seventy years ago the Queen was crowned in Westminster Abbey, not with the Imperial State Crown that now rests on her coffin, but with St Edward's Crown – a replica of the relic that was venerated as a tangible link with the Confessor himself. Queen Elizabeth was conscious of the long line of history that connected her with St Edward, whose feast we celebrate on 13 October each year.

Part of a reflection by Mgr Ronald Knox on St Edward the Confessor seems very apt today as we pray for his successor, Queen Elizabeth:

Is there any Christian who would not ask to change places with the Confessor? Who would not choose his resting-place, there to wait for the opening of the great Doomsday Book, in which nothing is recorded of men but whether they meant good or evil, whether they loved or neglected God?.....Man's happiness lies in devoting himself; his success in the offering he can make. And the Confessor was a successful man, yes, even in this world, because in his simple piety, in the unaffected generosity of his nature, he set himself to serve the men about him by easing their burdens, by relieving their necessities, by confirming them in their allegiance to the faith.

In the tributes that have been offered in memory of the late Queen we can hear an echo of some of these qualities, where leadership finds its truest expression in service after the example of Our Lord himself. Soon after the Queen was anointed and dedicated herself to a life of service she received Holy Communion - she drew upon the strength that only Christ can give to enable us to achieve the purpose of our calling in life.

Now Our Lord has called the late Queen to make her final journey towards the fullness of eternal life. When King Charles addressed the nation on the day after his mother's death he concluded with personal and heartfelt thanks to the Queen and he bade her Godspeed on that final journey with words that are familiar from the rite of Christian funerals: *May "flights of Angels sing thee to thy rest"*.

Today's second reading from the First Letter of St Paul to Timothy urges us: *there should be prayers offered for everyone – petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving – and especially for kings and others in authority.* As we offer this Mass for the repose of the soul of Queen Elizabeth and for the forgiveness of her sins, we also pray for the King, the Queen Consort and for all the Royal Family.

They have courageously and generously shared their very personal loss with the nation and the Commonwealth – keeping public vigil around the coffin of the Queen and visibly uniting themselves with all who share their gratitude for the Queen's life and their sense of loss at her death. With them, we pray with humility and confidence for the repose of her soul:

**Almighty God,
You are the author and sustainer of all human life;
grant that your servant, Elizabeth our Queen,
whom you granted a long and happy reign as Monarch of these
lands
may be forgiven her sins and rewarded with that eternal life
promised to all those born again
in the water of baptism and power of your Spirit.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
God, forever and ever,
Amen.**

**Eternal rest, grant to her O Lord,
And let Perpetual light shine upon her.
May she rest in peace...Amen.**

**May her soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed,
Through the mercy of God, rest in peace...Amen**

WELCOME

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: together with Mgr Timothy Menezes, the Cathedral Dean, I welcome you to St Chad's Cathedral as we come together to offer this Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

I welcome Professor Deirdre Kelly, Deputy Lieutenant for the County of the West Midlands, together with Sir Ian, as we remember the late Queen on the day before her State Funeral at Westminster Abbey.

I offer a warm welcome to the girl choristers from Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, singing today under the direction of James Luxton. You are used to the singing across the vast expanses of the cathedral in Liverpool - but I hope you will feel equally at home here at St Chad's.

I also welcome all those who have been unable to travel to St Chad's today but who are joining us in prayer via the live-streaming of today's Mass.

On Friday Cardinal Vincent spoke to King Charles during an Audience for national faith leaders at Buckingham Palace. The King asked Cardinal Vincent to assure all the Catholics of England and Wales of his personal thanks for the prayers that we have been offering for His Majesty and for the Royal Family at this time.

With these many intentions in our hearts we turn to God our loving Father at the outset of this Mass and ask for his gift of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace.