

From the Vicar - May 2023

I hope that you are well and continuing to enjoy the Easter season.

Easter is one of my favourite times of year, and I always try to celebrate the whole season, rather than just a few days. I expect, though, that for most of us, the Easter eggs and chocolates are now long gone, and our gaze and focus has turned away from Easter and towards the Coronation of King Charles III – and the even more important Cuddesdon Fete! May promises to be a merry month, with three Bank Holiday weekends, the Coronation and the fete; and in the church calendar, we also celebrate Ascension Day and Pentecost (Whit Sunday).

Recently, I've been thinking about the oil of Chrism, which has links with both Easter (or, more accurately, Holy Week); and the Coronation. You may have read, or seen on the news, a month or two ago, about the Chrism oil which was consecrated, in March, by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre - the church which is recognised as containing the site where Jesus was crucified, and also the empty tomb. The Chrism oil which will be used to anoint King Charles at his Coronation was created using olives from the Mount of Olives, where King Charles' grandmother, Alice, is buried. The olives were pressed just outside Bethlehem, and the oil has been perfumed with sesame, rose, jasmine, cinnamon, neroli, benzoin, amber and orange blossom. From ancient kings through to the present day, monarchs have been anointed with oil from the Holy Land, as a sign of God's grace and blessing. The oil of Chrism is a sign of participation in the communion of Jesus Christ, the Anointed One or Messiah; and is also associated with the blessings and gifts brought by the Holy Spirit.

On Maundy Thursday – the Thursday before Easter – I joined with many clergy and Licensed Lay Ministers across the Diocese in reaffirming our commitment to ministry, at the Chrism Mass in Christ Church Cathedral. At this annual service, oils for ministry are also blessed and distributed: the oil for anointing the sick and the dying; the oil for signing with the cross at baptism; and the oil of chrism

(used after baptism, and at confirmation, ordination, coronation, and on other occasions linked to commissioning, calling and service).

The use of blessed oils, during baptisms, Home Communion, Wholeness and Healing Services, home visits, and on other occasions, is, for me, one of the immense joys and privileges of priestly ministry. I, and others, often experience a profound and lasting sense of God's peace and God's loving presence, through the act of anointing. And, this year, as the Coronation approaches, it's lovely to remind people that, just as King Charles will be anointed as a sign that he has been chosen and called by God for a special role and purpose, so they are special too: chosen, called and beloved children of the God who knows us by name, and loves us unconditionally.

As you watch the Coronation, I invite you to close your eyes for a moment and imagine (or recall) yourself being anointed with blessed oil, too – perhaps you were anointed at your baptism or confirmation, or on another more recent occasion – and ask God to send the Holy Spirit to inspire and to encourage you, and to fill you with peace, joy, hope and love.

May God bless you, and smile upon you,

Karen x