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Archbishop Stephen writes in The House magazine ahead of the Coronation of King Charles III. The article follows in full

As I write these words rehearsals for the Coronation are in full swing, the work to build the Coronation Theatre in Westminster Abbey is about to commence and we can already see viewing stands and media positions being constructed outside Buckingham Palace and elsewhere. There is the inevitable smell of new paint!

The Coronation is a remarkable piece of historical continuity, with its roots in Anglo Saxon rites, and continues to use as its basis the form established by the Liber Regalis in the late 14th century. Set within a celebration of the Holy Communion, the key moments of the rite include the Recognition, taking of the Oath, anointing, crowning and enthroning. Alongside this sit the presentation of the Regalia, the Bible, and other attributes of Monarchy. And we will also see the anointing and crowning of the Queen.

A Coronation espouses something of the relationship between Crown, Church and State, but like any act of worship it takes place at a particular time in a particular context. Worship, as Christians understand it, is the offering of ourselves in praise and service of God. In that offering we lay before God the world as it is, praying that God's will for the world is done. It is what Christians mean in the Lord's Prayer when we say 'thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven'.

So that then brings us to change. Since the last Coronation whilst the great institutions of our land endure, nevertheless the nation they serve is radically different. The start of the Elizabethan era in 1552 was marked by a renewed optimism in the post-war period with an invigorated Commonwealth, then perhaps the start of the Carolinian era is marked by a nation that is pluralistic, multi-cultural, diverse and continuing to ask some fundamental questions of its own identity.

It is within the context of a very different world and nation that this Coronation takes place. This will be reflected in the involvement in the Abbey of other Christian leaders, people of different faiths, a guest list comprising not only world leaders and leaders of our public life but also people who, through their volunteering are backbones of their community. There are opportunities for young people to be involved, alongside our neighbours from the Commonwealth. And so this Coronation will be not only be rooted in history and the rich tradition we have inherited but is also striving to be reflective of the nation in which we live and which we aspire to be.

And as I seek to play my own small part in this extraordinary occasion I will in the Abbey be praying for our nation and for our common life, I will pray for our new King and the responsibilities that are laid upon him, for his Queen and all the Royal Family. But I will pray also that whilst the service will focus on our own earthly Kingdom we might also seek always after God's heavenly kingdom with justice, mercy and service as its hallmarks.



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