

Sermons, Speeches & Addresses

Diamond Jubilee Service Address
27 May 2012



May I speak in the name of the God of Love. Amen.

It is to the great credit of the Lord Lieutenant, Dame Lorna Muirhead, and her predecessor Alan Waterworth that Merseyside has been visited so often by Her Majesty the Queen.

I remember when she came for the opening of Liverpool One, and sitting at her table for lunch with the Lord Mayor. He was explaining to her how difficult he found it to call her "Mam". Not because he wanted to say "Marm" as in 'calm down' but because the only person he'd ever called "Mam" was his mother!

The Queen, Mother, Grandmother, Great Grandmother, was certainly amused! For my part, I was explaining the history of Liverpool to her and saying how the City Port had been the Heathrow of the 19th Century. The Queen in fact had just opened the 5th Terminal at the airport – which had then spectacularly broken down! "Oh", she said, "not like Terminal 5 I hope!" So much for my royal history lesson!

One of the memories I cherish is the visit she made to this Cathedral for her Maundy Service. She came here straight from France where she'd celebrated the Centenary of the Entente Cordiale.

She'd insisted on completing the celebrations in France in time to do the Maundy Service. She has not missed this in all her 60 year reign. Apart from the Coronation Service this of all the services that she attends throughout the year sums up her life, her work, her reign. And this service today seeks to capture the essence of her vocation which is 'to serve'.

Her Majesty is very aware of our celebration of her Diamond Jubilee today. She knows that it has uniquely spanned both Cathedrals and the length of Hope Street and has asked that her very best wishes be extended to us all.

In the Coronation Service after taking the oaths to govern and to "*cause Law and Justice with Mercy, to be executed in all (her) judgements*" The Queen is presented with a Bible.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says:

*"Our gracious Queen:
we present you with this Book,
the most valuable thing that this world affords."*

Then the Moderator of the Church of Scotland continues:

*"Here is Wisdom;
This is the royal Law;
These are the lively Oracles of God."*

It is a remarkable claim. "*The most valuable thing that the world affords*". This is said in front of the priceless Crown Jewels.

Why should the Bible be deemed so valuable?

Because in these pages we read of the love of God. The word from God is Love.

As every great tradition of faith and wisdom reveals, the greatest human virtue is love – we are most fulfilled when we are loved and love. The source of this love is none other than our Creator. The Bible tells us that our human love is divine in origin – because God loves and longs to be loved by us mere mortals.

The great human manifestation of this divine love is when God sends his own into the world to be the servant of others.

We see this in Jesus. His life as a servant of others is the very example that the Queen takes to herself at her Coronation and re-enacts in the Maundy Service.

In the Maundy Service celebrated here in Liverpool we had as we do today not only our Civic Leaders but the Leaders of our faith communities.

This was important to her Majesty for two reasons. Firstly, as Head of the Commonwealth she more than any other world leader has over her six decades appreciated the ancient wisdom of the world's great religions.

Secondly, as she said so eloquently at Lambeth Palace, the Church of England, of which she is Supreme Governor, *"has (taken to itself) a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country"*. It is one of the ways in which the Church of England in her generation serves the nation. The future stability of our society, of the world, depends on harmony between the faith communities. This is why Her Majesty and the Prince of Wales see the role of Defender of the Faith as protector of the faith of others and of the role of faith in public life.

It is also one of the reasons that Archbishop Patrick and I together with the Christian leaders on Merseyside welcome the participation of our fellow faith leaders in the Act of Remembrance with the Royal British Legion on the steps of St. George's Hall.

This city and this region has led the way in bringing together those once divided by faith. It has paved the way for religious harmony. It has built a street called Hope – both literally and spiritually. We have walked it both literally and spiritually. Without compromising our convictions we are united in loving our neighbour as our self and working for a world of spiritual harmony.

This is the Christ-like example that the Queen holds before us as Head of the Commonwealth and Head of the Church of England– loving our neighbour as our self, serving one another.

In this unique celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on Merseyside we give thanks for the Christ-like service of the Queen.

She is none other than our Servant Queen. For such an example to us all – to God be the glory.