

God says to Joshua 'As I was with Moses, so shall I be with you.' Moses called to lead the people of Israel for so many years has died and now God is calling Joshua to the same heavy weight of leadership. But as God calls his people, he equips them for the task for which they are called. Her Majesty the Queen fulfilled her calling as Monarch to the very highest degree. No vows have been more fully fulfilled than the ones she made before God to her people. Today, in the midst of our continuing grief at the death of Queen Elizabeth, symbolically expressed in the lowering of flags to half mast, today following the proclamation of the accession of our new King, the flags have been raised to full mast. A new era has begun. 'The Queen is dead. Long live the King!' These words which we are now hearing and to which we are now responding 'Long live the King', are an expression of the *continuity* of the monarchy. Prince Charles became King Charles III the very moment the Queen died.

But the continuity of the monarchy does not mean that everything will remain the same. To be alive, to be healthy, is to adapt to the changing circumstances in which we find ourselves. As her late Majesty said 20 years ago. 'Change is a constant. Managing it has become an expanding discipline. The way we embrace it defines our future.' This is true of the life of the Church and indeed of every Christian. As Newman wrote 'To live is to change. To be perfect is to have changed often.' The sail of a yacht cannot stay in the same place as the winds change.

Joshua faces different challenges from Moses but God equips and guides him through them. King Charles III will face some different challenges from the Queen, but the same God continues to work his purposes out through each of them. For all those seeking to do God's will, as King Charles so clearly does God's words to Joshua for them for each of us. The word of God is present tense to all with faith. After promising his continuing and constant presence with Joshua, God says, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.' Perhaps we too need to hear and receive these words in this time of change and uncertainty.

But in the midst of the change there is continuity. King Charles III has committed himself before God to the very same pledge as his mother who, as Princess Elizabeth, aged 21, said to the peoples of the Commonwealth 'I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and to the family of nations to which we all belong.'

The Queen recognized in what she said and what she did, that we across the nations are a family, actually that the whole of humanity across all faiths and cultures is one family. One humanity in our rich diversity. So, there is no place for aggressive sectarianism. She was a unifier not a divider, a bridge builder not a wall builder. Our new King has these attributes in abundance. In Genesis, God creates 'Adam' from the dust. 'Adam' in the Rabbinic Hebrew is the generic name for all humanity. All of humanity is created by God, in the image of God for relationship with God, with one another and with God's creation. There's a wonderful African expression, 'ubuntu' which means something like 'I am because you are'. There is no life without relationship. And this relationship is not primarily one of birds of a feather flocking together, it is not about sticking together with our own kith and kin. It is not about tribalism. It is one which reaches out across all differences of ethnicity and culture. This is what Jesus teaches in one of the Queen's favorite parables, 'The Good Samaritan'. Truly to be a good neighbor we are to love and to serve those who are different from ourselves. We are not to allow religion or ideology excuse us from caring for the poor and needy.

Our new King, as Prince has demonstrated this crossing of boundaries and this serving of others again and again. He has not stayed in an ivory tower of privilege. He has given many thousands of young people from very tough backgrounds opportunities to change their lives. He knows the living conditions of many of the poorest in our country, and indeed from his travels of the poorest in the world. He has demonstrated perhaps more than anyone his concern for the whole world and the whole creation. Like his mother he can help us look outward, in service and action.

In our second reading, we see the vision God gave to St John, the Divine of the fulfilment when Kings and peoples of every race and nation come before the throne of God, and from this throne flows the river of the water of life. On either side of the river is the tree of life 'and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.'

The continuing will of God, revealed so powerfully in the life and witness of Her Majesty the Queen is for this healing and reconciliation of all. This same desire, which is truly of God, is I believe, deep in the heart of our new King. He will need our continuing prayers and he will have them. God save the King.