

St Edmund's Day at Douai is dear to us in so many ways, but, not least because of the testimony of St Edmund's unswerving Catholic principles, consistent with his remarkable martyrdom. We remember with fondness the members of this community who have inspired us, and whom we have loved, but who have gone before us. From the power of the intercession of St Edmund, this community looks through the years to its future, which like its past, is in God.

Yet, this year, the juxtaposition of Christ the King with St Edmund transfers the liturgical celebration of our patron organically, to the following day. It does so in the particular context of a year noteworthy for the death of Our Sovereign Lady and the accession of HM King Charles. Placed between 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe' and the Second Coming, through the mystic anointing of King St Edmund, we call on the intercession of patronal martyr, that our 'inner vision' be clear and untrammelled by compromise of earthly designs,. For our stewardship of Christ's mysteries must demonstrate the mind of Christ, as exemplified by the kingdom and governance of St Edmund, similarly expounded by yesterday's feast: Truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace.

Between symbols journeying 'from rite to ritual' rather than 'from ritual to rite' in a few short months we will have seen the militia of a royal funeral, fittingly reminding us that Queen Elisabeth 'did battle for the true king', faithful to her oaths of Coronation and the mystic anointing of kings that awaits King Charles.

Death brings proportion to our earthly existence, as anointing opens human beings to God's promises. Few will have failed to be moved by the symbolic removal of the orb and sceptre from Queen Elizabeth's coffin in the final moments of her obsequies, to be placed on the altar, with the crown placed between the two.

At the Coronation, the orb and sceptre will be bequeathed to the new King as symbols of his authority, spiritual and temporal. The crown, laid on his head, between the two, he will wear for the remainder of his days, by the grace of God, with God as the eternal constant in the 'betweenness'. The passing of times and seasons is an ongoing reminder to us that death and decay give way to life and freshness in abundance, but all from the grace and favour of God alone. These are illustrated by the rite of anointing. We do well to pay attention to each of the anointings we receive. You will be aware that Great Britain is the last Christian monarchy to anoint its sovereign.

The ideal of Christological kingship continues to obtain today, albeit in a radically different historical and political context from that of its beginnings, but the fusion of history with liturgical theology will inspire, not only a spirit of service, but an attuning that bids us onward, aided by St Edmund. The royal

Homily St Edmund KM 20.11.2022 Douai

anointing of St Edmund intercedes for ours. It comforts and enlivens us, who in baptism are already anointed priest, prophet and king.

When our late Queen Elisabeth II was still a girl, she witnessed the coronation of her own father, George VI's. As an eleven-year-old, she wrote of a "haze of wonder" that filled the abbey at the time of his anointing and crowning, as the beauty of holiness. The beauty of holiness eclipsed sin and death in Dismas, as tradition names the 'good thief', abandoned to the social death of the dismal, on the wood of a yet lifeless Cross. The martyrdom of St Edmund on a tree is an obvious parallel to the configuration of his life with the death of Christ. That alignment is the future of all the saints.

If this feast confirms us in the mission of his kingdom. we can look to be led into the presence of the One coming on the clouds of heaven. His peace will be an eternal peace, into which we shall gladly yield, having persevered in our 'battle for the true king', to celebrate his praise eternally. For, 'His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty, and his empire will never be destroyed.'