



Church of St. John the Evangelist, Elora  
May 7 2023 - Feast of St. John the Evangelist  
Coronation Weekend  
Canon Paul Walker

The crowning of a King has at the heart of a Coronation liturgy the anointing.

That moment in the Coronation is a private and most sacred event, during which Handel's familiar anthem, "Zadok the Priest" is sung.

The King, having shed the robes of the State, is visibly divested of all worldly honours and adornments. He looks and walks humbly as though there is something suddenly very common about him. He sits on the 700 year old Coronation chair and becomes invisible to us behind the screen.

The oil used in the anointing was harvested from two groves on the Mount of Olives: the Monastery of Mary Magdalene and the Monastery of the Ascension. The Monastery of Mary Magdalene is the burial place of His Majesty's grandmother, and the olives were pressed just outside Bethlehem. The oil was blessed in the church of the Holy Sepulchre by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Archbishop in Jerusalem.\* After the anointing the screen is removed and the King becomes visible once again, still simply dressed, and then the transformation begins.

The anointed King is first clothed with a simple white linen sleeveless tunic, and then vested, by his son, William, with the Supertunica, a seamless gold coat, a belt and a priestly stole. From there he receives all the various items of the regalia, and finally the King is crowned. Unlike the anointing, this part of the liturgy is a public, visible and symbolic transformation of a person who, vested with all these items - which is a tremendous burden to place on any one person - he becomes for us someone who is consecrated or set apart to take on this unique role of a Sovereign. There is no one else in this role.

With all those items vested *on* him and all those roles vested *in* him, it is no wonder the Archbishop exclaims, and then all those gathered in the Abbey join in exclaiming together, "God save the King." With all that, the King needs saving, and in so doing, after having placed all of that on his head, if the King is saved, then so are we.

Today we not only celebrate the Coronation of our King, but also the Feast of our patron saint, St. John the Evangelist.

This parish was first established in 1830, which means in seven years (2030) we celebrate our 200th anniversary as a parish. We weren't always at this location. People have been coming to this building to offer prayers, encounter God, and learn about Jesus

since 1875. Which means in two years (2025) we celebrate 150 years of worshiping in this building. No wonder we feel a sense of the holy here. That's a lot of prayers, intentions, promises, blessings offered in this space. Those are two big milestones and it makes me wonder how we are going to mark those events.

St. John the Evangelist is the fourth gospel. As the last written document describing the events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the canon of the Christian scriptures, it is the gospel that is most developed in its theology, perhaps most structured in its writing style, and most artistic in its themes. It is preoccupied with testimony: the testimony first given by John the Baptist, then by Andrew and Philip, then the guests at the wedding in Cana, the Samaritan woman at the well, the paralytic at the pool, the multitude in the wilderness, and the blind man; then by Mary and Martha in Bethany, and finally through to the testimony of Mary Magdalene and Thomas. It is preoccupied with the anointed one, the Messiah, the revelation of the glory of God; with themes of light and darkness, the ability to see and believe. It is structured through the seven "signs," the seven great "I am" statements of Jesus; and the five meals. And the gospel is clear about its purpose: "These things are written, that you might come to believe that Jesus

is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through believing you might have life in his name."

Every Sunday there is someone here for the first time. Last Sunday there was a mother and her five year old daughter. The five year old was suitably occupied with the contents of a children's activity pack, until she heard the choir. And then she leaned out into the aisle to get a better look and to listen attentively to this remarkable sound - a sound she had never heard in her life. She was fixated on this sound so much she needed to stand on her tip toes to get a better look and a clearer listen. She was transformed. She was five. Like John, we are clear about our purpose; proclaim the love of Christ.

On this Coronation weekend, as we celebrate our Patronal Feast, my hope and prayer is that this place continue to be a holy place of prayer, where people of all ages come to see, to hear, and lean into the aisle or stand on their tip toes to get a better look and listen, and somehow be changed. My hope is that people come to hear your story of why you are here, to hear the testimony of the apostles, and thereby encounter the anointed one, the Messiah. In so doing, like a King, we are too are anointed by the Spirit, vested in a new vision of the world and set free to be the people of God.

\* Notes from Authorized Coronation Liturgy with Commentary, Church of England.