

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

# The coronation of King Charles III

A fact sheet for teachers with teaching  
suggestions for history and RE

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## What is a coronation?

The coronation is a Christian ceremony where a king or queen is crowned during a Church of England Eucharist service. Historically these take place at Westminster Abbey in London. Towards the end of the service the monarch makes oaths or promises to both God and the people. They will also receive a blessing by being anointed with oil and receive the Royal regalia to show they have accepted the duty and responsibilities of a monarch.

Westminster Abbey has been the church used for all coronations of English monarchs since 1066 with the coronation of William the Conqueror and will be used again for King Charles III.

The coronation takes place in a special part of the Abbey known as the coronation theatre on a highly decorated floor. The Coronation Chair is placed in the centre of the floor facing the high altar for the coronation to take place. The coronation is conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury reflecting its significance in the Church of England.

## What is the order of events?

The coronation takes place in a specific order.

**Presentation and acclamation** – The new king will be presented to the people who will show they recognise and accept him.

**Making the oath** – The King will make his promise to God and the people about the type of king he will be.

**Anointing or hallowing** – This part is normally not seen by the people and is when the holy oil is poured from the ampulla into a spoon and the Archbishop will anoint the head, heart, and hands of the king to show that he is chosen by God.

**Investiture** – This is the point that the king will receive the royal regalia and be crowned with the St Edwards crown.

**Homage** – Peers, bishops and members of the royal family pledge their allegiance to the king before he moves to another chapel to change robe and crown.

**Procession** – The king and queen consort will process out of the abbey and will then ride through London in the state coach to be seen by the people.

This information is summarised from the Order of service of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and information about the Liber Regalis. More information can be found at <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/> and <https://www.history.org.uk/primary/resource/10621/the-coronation-of-king-charles-iii>

## What is worn for the coronation?

At each of the different parts of the coronation different clothes are worn; these are:

**The Robe of State** - during the Presentation and acclamation and the oath, the monarch wears this when they enter Westminster Abbey and whilst they are presented and make their oath. This robe is unique to each monarch and will be the robe they also wear whenever they open Parliament. It is usually long, crimson red in colour and decorated in gold and lace, with a cape of ermine.

The **Colobium Sindonis** or shroud tunic - during the anointing. This is a simple and unadorned item of clothing symbolising standing before God for his blessing.

The **Supertunica** and **Palium Regale** - during the Investiture and Homage. These items made from gold cloth date back to 1821 and are the only robes and clothing which will not be made specifically for the king for the coronation.

The **Imperial Robe** or **Robe of Estate** - during the Procession. This purple velvet robe will be designed by the king with his choice of symbols and forms the last of the robes he will wear for the coronation.

## What objects are used during the coronation?

**Sceptre with cross** - This is the symbol of the monarch's earthly power and good governance. It is set with the largest colourless cut diamond in the world, the Cullinan I.

**Orb and cross** - Made from a hollow globe sphere and decorated with emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and diamonds, it is the symbol of the sovereign's power from God with the cross mounted on the globe shape.

**Crown of St Edward** - This crown made of gold and set with 444 jewels and stones is the crown that will be placed on the king's head during the coronation.

**The Sovereign's Ring** - This is to symbolise the marriage of the monarch to the nation and is made from gold with a sapphire overlaid by rubies in a cross shape to represent the crosses of St George for England and St Andrew for Scotland.

**Sceptre with dove or Rod of equity and Mercy** – This sceptre represents the spiritual role of the monarch and is made from gold, silver emeralds, rubies and diamonds and topped with an enamelled dove which is the symbol for the Holy ghost.

**Imperial State Crown** – This is the crown which the monarch will change to at the end of the coronation ceremony and wear for the procession. It is also the crown worn for state occasions like the opening of Parliament. Made from gold, it is set with three very large stones as well as 2868 diamonds, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds and 269 pearls. The jewels come from all over the world and include the Cullinan II diamond, the Stuart sapphire which was saved by King Charles II, an irregular cabochon spinel known as the Black Princes' ruby dating back to Edward III in 1376, and the St Edward's sapphire dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century which was taken from the ring of Edward the confessor. The crown also features three pearls which belonged to Queen Elizabeth I.

**The Sword of Temporal Justice** - Symbolising the monarch's role as head of the armed forces this sword dates to Charles I coronation in 1626 and is carried unsheathed and pointing up during the procession.

**The Sword of Mercy (Curtana)** – Symbolising one of the Royal virtues of mercy this sword also from Charles I has a blunt tip to symbolise it can no longer be used as a weapon.

**The Sword of Spiritual Justice** – Symbolising the role as defender of the faith this sword completes the trio of swords carried at the coronation.

**Ampulla and spoon with holy oil** - The gold Ampulla in the shape of an eagle (from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century legend of the Virgin Mary appearing to St Thomas a Becket and presenting him with a golden eagle for use in crowning future kings) holds the holy oil for the anointing and has a hole in the beak to pour this into the silver gilt coronation spoon. The spoon is the oldest piece of the regalia and was part of the 1349 coronation inventory but may date back to Henry II or Richard I.

**St George's Spurs** - Made of gold and velvet and featuring a Tudor rose, these spurs are a symbol of knighthood and chivalry.

**Armills** – Gold bracelets of sincerity and wisdom, the originals are enamelled and decorated. Queen Elizabeth II had armills that were simpler and feature a Tudor rose clasp.

**The St Edwards or Coronation Chair containing the Stone of Scone** – Made for Edward I this is the chair all monarchs are crowned in. Placed in the middle of the Cosmati pavement facing the high altar. This oak chair has space for the Stone of Scone or the stone of destiny to be placed within it. In 1296 King Edward 1 of England seized the stone from Scone Abbey in Scotland and brought it to England to be placed in the base of the Coronation Chair. The Stone of Scone is kept in Scotland and was traditionally used in the coronation of Scottish monarchs. It disappeared in the 1950s from the Abbey and was brought back to Scotland but

was eventually returned to England. However, in 1996 it was returned to Scottish keeping on the agreement it would be brought to Westminster Abbey and placed in the chair for future coronations.

**The Gold State Coach** - Used after the coronation for the king to return to Buckingham Palace following the coronation. It is the third oldest coach and was built in 1762 and has been used at every coronation since 1821. It is not solid gold but made from a giltwood covered in gold leaf and needs eight horses to pull it. At seven metres long and 3.6 metres tall, it weighs four tonnes and so can only be pulled at walking pace.

The following information has been summarised from the Royal Collection Trust at <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/Trails/the-crown-jewels> where you will also find pictures of the objects.

## How do we celebrate?

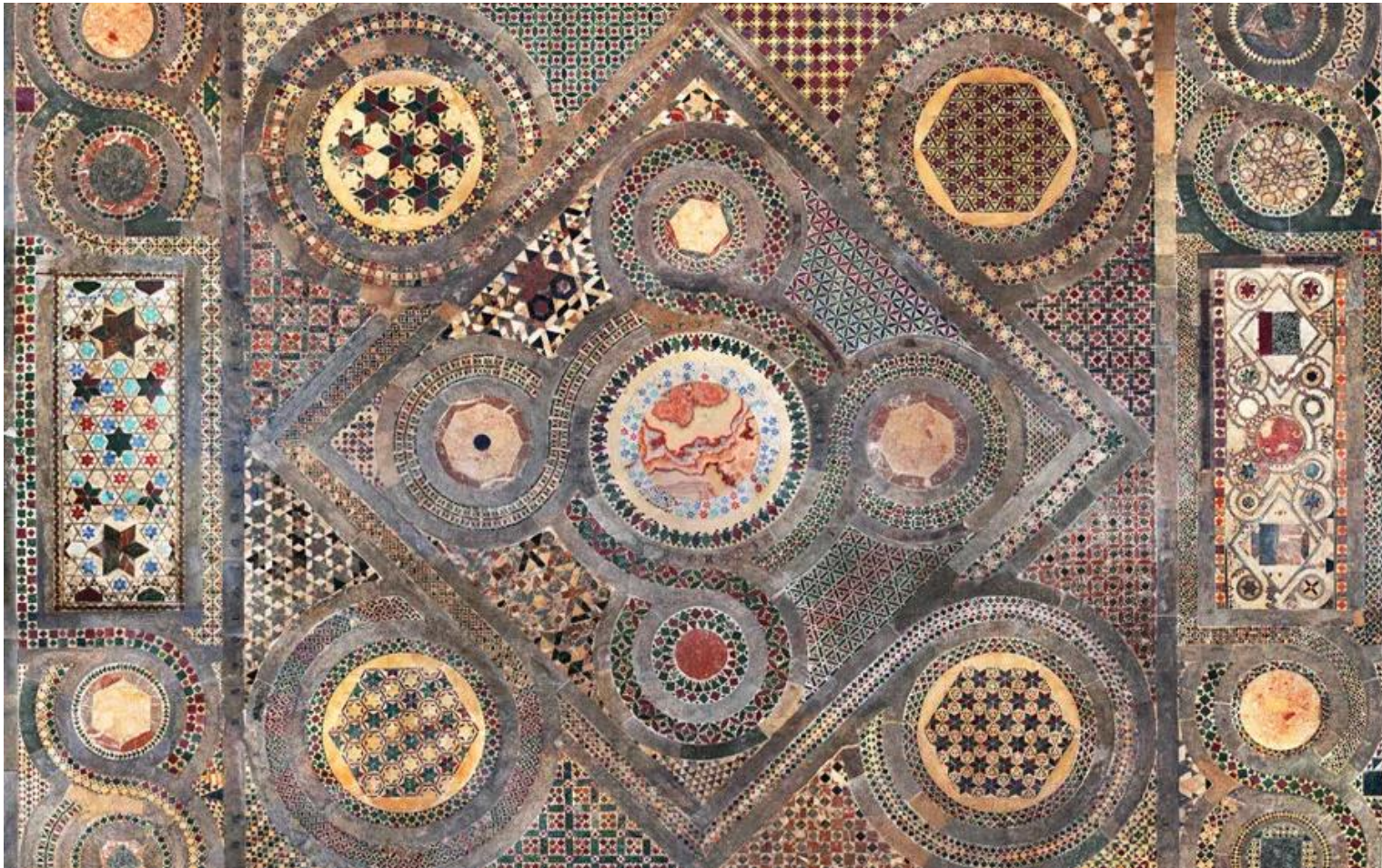
The coronation service will be shown on TV on Saturday 6 May 2023. For only the second time in history, people around the world will be able to watch it live.

There will be a special concert held at Windsor Castle on Sunday 7 May 2023 that some people have been given tickets to attend, but it is also being shown on TV.

The Coronation *Big Lunch* is being held on Sunday 7 May 2023 where friends and neighbours are being encouraged to get together to eat lunch or have a street party to celebrate.

The *Big help out* is being held on Monday 8 May 2023 where people all over the country are being asked to volunteer to make their local community better.

Further information about the celebrations and events can be found at <https://www.royal.uk/coronation>.



The Cosmati pavement in the Coronation theatre of Westminster Abbey

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The Coronation of King Charles III



The Cosmati pavement and High Altar.

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The Coronation chair



The Coronation Chair with Stone of Scone.

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## Useful links

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/about-the-abbey/history/coronations-at-the-abbey/spotlight-on-coronations>

The Royal family website <https://coronation.gov.uk/>

The Coronation Emblem <https://www.royal.uk/coronation-emblem>

The Royal Collection Trust <https://www.rct.uk/discover/school-resources/being-a-monarch-toolkit>

## Ideas for use in the classroom

The coronation of King Charles III can be used in both history and RE lessons to reflect an event that has its setting in a place of great historical significance and has a significance that is both historic and religious.

### History

In history teaching, it can be used across Key Stage 1, 2 and 3 to reveal what the coronation, its symbols and ceremony reveal about the authority and role of the monarch and how this has changed over time from the Anglo-Saxon period which children study in Key Stage 2 to the present day.

The Stone of Scone has an interesting story and reveals something of the historical relationship between England and Scotland and controversy surrounding this today which could be explored through a story board or discussion with children.

The coronation would be a very useful event to explore the disciplinary concept of *change and continuity over time* and therefore photographs/portraits of different monarchs at their coronation would be useful to show so that children can spot the symbols and explore how a monarch's power has changed over time. The ideas in the KS1 *Queens' Lives and Times* pack and the KS2 *Changing Power of Monarchy* pack would be a helpful basis to explore this and the medium-term plans for these can be found on the History Moodle here: <https://history.hias.hants.gov.uk/course/index.php?categoryid=25> .

The coronation provides an excellent opportunity to learn about Anglo-Saxon/Medieval kingship and its legacy today.

### RE

As this is the first coronation within many people's lifetime and certainly for children/students, it is worth considering exploring this in lessons. There are a number of ways in which this material could be used, including within RE cycles on *sacred, symbol or ritual*. There are a range of issues that could be discussed with older children, including the Christian nature of the ritual, the role of the Koh-i-Noor diamond and why it will not be used, the role of the monarchy, King Charles III's work to make the ceremony more diverse, and the relevance of the symbolism used within the ceremony. Below is an example of how a cycle could be constructed for upper KS2 or lower KS3.

**Intended learning outcomes**

Children/young people will be able to:

- Step 1 Communicate** – respond creatively as well as begin to explain a personal response to the concept of **routine/ritual**
- Step 2 Apply** – explain examples of how their responses to **routine/ritual** can be applied to their own and others' lives
- Step 3 Inquire** – accurately explain the meaning of **ritual** using the concept of **routine** to distinguish this
- Step 4 Contextualise** – accurately explain the Christian **ritual** of coronation
- Step 5 Evaluate** – discern the value of **ritual** for the UK and the possible value for themselves and others.
- Informed by end of Year 6 expectations**

**Assessment opportunities**

Evidence can be gathered when children:

- 1 write a description/definition
- 2 contribute to debate
- 3 explain their response to the concept
- 4 explain the role and value of ritual.

**Sequence of activities****Step 1 – Communicate: Daily routine.**

- Young people add their daily routines to post-it-notes. These can then be shared as a class.
- Young people discuss why a routine might be a good thing and how they feel about having these routines. *Are there any similarities or differences they can identify between routines? Do any stand out as different or more important?*
- **Alternatively-** give young people a definition of *ritual* and ask them what they do that might match this definition, for example, having a birthday cake, and why these things matter to them.

**Step 2 – Apply: Ritual or routine?**

- Share a list of school routines. Young people could separate these into ones they support and those they do not. Create their own list of what they feel would be the most important routines. *What would the difference be in their life, and in school if these didn't happen?*
- Young people look at important events in the school (this might include things like a Remembrance assembly, or special events that happen for Christmas, or holding an assembly together).
- Group discussion of why these might be important and how they might be similar or different to the list of routines.
- **Alternatively-** identify what events in school they have that match this definition. *Why does the school do these things? What would the difference be if they didn't happen?*

**Step 3 – Inquire: What is a ritual?**

- Share a range of examples of rituals. These could be images, or clips. Identify what makes them different from a routine and what features they have that means they are a ritual.
- Write a definition of *ritual*.
- Mind-map reasons why rituals might be important (eg: to mark membership of the group, to remember an important event). This could link to work on community if this concept has been taught.
- Using the examples as a reference point, discuss as a class which *rituals* the children consider to be important, and which could be dispensed with.

**Step 4 – Contextualise: Why is the coronation an important ritual?**

- Young people share what they know about the coronation.
- Use the information in this factsheet to explore this in more detail.
- Depending on the age of the young people, they could do one or more of the following:
  - Identify features from the information that fit their definition of *ritual* and use this to explain why the coronation is a ritual.
  - Identify what evidence there is that this is mainly a Christian and/or secular ritual and whether this matters to how we engage with it.
  - Discuss in groups reasons this particular ritual might be important to many people across the country.
  - For older children, there could be an exploration of how King Charles III intends to make the coronation more diverse, inviting faith leaders from a range of religious traditions and why this might be significant. This could also look at why the Koh-I-Noor diamond will not appear in the crown of the Queen Consort.

**Step 5 – Evaluate: How do rituals affect our lives?**

- Using what has been covered so far, discuss as a class why rituals are important to many people. This could take the form of a debate around the statement *Rituals no longer matter in modern Britain*, for example.
- In pairs or groups decide whether the coronation is an important ritual for them and how and if they will mark the event as a result of this assessment.
- Design a promotional poster for the coronation explaining why this event matters to many people and is an important ritual.
- For older children, there could be a debate around the Christian nature of this ritual, eg *A Christian ritual is not appropriate to crown a King who represents diverse modern Britain*.

**Opportunities for promoting children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development**

**Spiritual:** providing an opportunity for enjoyment and fascination about their own lives and those of others. Giving opportunities to rejoice and celebrate things that are important to us.

**Moral:** developing an ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.

**Social:** sharing our own experiences and respond to the experiences of others. Working and socialising with others in a range of learning opportunities.

**Cultural:** willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, and cultural opportunities. Giving children an interest in and an opportunity to explore different faiths and beliefs.

**Vocabulary (in bold) and knowledge building blocks****Children will learn that:**

- the coronation is an example of a religious ritual
- the coronation is based on a Christian ceremony as part of a Holy Communion service at Westminster Abbey
- the monarch makes promises to God and his people
- the monarch receives a **blessing** and is **anointed**
- every **symbol** shows what is invisible about the monarch, such as symbols of power and duty.