

We are being asked to make an oath of allegiance to King Charles on the day of his coronation on 6th May – a voluntary act, and not this time to be recorded as a proof of loyalty to a king who is at least more open to defending faith in general than faith only in the Church of England. But it's an oath all the same which sits uncomfortably with that original oath of supremacy which sent so many good Catholics to their deaths in the sixteenth century, beginning today, in 1535, with the Carthusian monks, Blessed John Houghton and Blessed Robert Lawrence and Blessed Augustine Webster, watched by St Thomas More who was to follow shortly after, as did so many others including ten remaining Carthusian monks starved to death in Newgate in May 1537. We remember them and the many others who stood out against Henry's abuse of power because abuse of power remains commonplace and is always an offence against God and, like Henry's gradual progress towards absolute power, often done little by little so that its victims also gradually compromise themselves little by little. The deep irony of these times is that we may lose our freedoms in defence of faith once again. Do make sure you take some form of photographic identity when you vote today and don't even think of protesting on Saturday – the law no longer allows it. Just keep smiling at the cameras.

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