

# African Dancers, Bongo Drums And A Punjabi Hymn... The Oh- So Modern Arrival Of Britain's New Archbishop

Quentin Letts, Daily Mail (London), March 21, 2013



Habemus Cantaur, as they might say in Rome. Days after the installation of the latest Bishop of Rome, Canterbury yesterday enthroned its own new Archbishop in a service whose vaulting ceremonial accommodated bongo drums, a Punjabi melody—and suppressed giggles from the Duchess of Cornwall.

It was a quintessentially Anglican do with wedding hats, thunder rolls of organ and splodges of political correctness.

Enter processions with crucifers and taperers, lay clerks, sheriffs, the ceremonarius, a whole arsenal of canons. There were various virgers, vesturers aplenty, and a dean as damp and kindly as Sergeant Wilson from Dad's Army.

David Cameron and (atheist) Edward Miliband sat beside one other. Speaker Bercow had brought along his pretty young trainbearer.

Cabinet minister Chris Grayling was there in his guise and garb as Lord Chancellor, looking a bit like third herald in the Christmas panto at Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre.

We also had African dancers. It was they who set off Camilla, sitting beside the Prince of Wales.



Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, and Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, watch dancing Africans.

The African chaps came jiving past in the middle of the service, twirling, yoo-be-dooing, their knees bouncing as high as blokes walking on a hot beach. Yeowww, bro', that sand is hot!

Who can blame Camilla? Her lips did a crumple, the shoulders started to shake and if she had been drinking soup she might have done the nose trick.



The 105th Archbishop, Justin Welby, wanted this to be known as his ‘inaugural service’ but enthronement was indisputably the word when he sat in the ancient cathedra Augustini—the physical, marble Chair of Augustine, which may date to the 6th century.

He looked the part in it and his clear, strong voice bespoke a man at ease with the tasks ahead.

Thomas Becket sat in that chair and came to a sticky end near the very spot where Archbishop Welby yesterday preached (he mentioned the NHS and social care but admitted it was perfectly ‘proper’ to believe in self-reliance).

When he struck the cathedral door at three o’clock – three solid whacks with his crosier—and was met by teenager Evangeline Kanagasooriam, he replied to her question, ‘With what confidence do you come?’ with the words, ‘I come in weakness and fear and in much trembling’.

And yet he looked pretty composed. Happy even. At the end he gave a little wave to his family as he strode towards his new destiny.

A secularist media, gay marriage, female bishops, Christian persecution: this is a heck of a burden he is undertaking. The Church seems united behind him, for the moment. As he made his way towards the high altar at the start of yesterday’s service he was supported by interventions from episcopal and ecumenical colleagues.

These included a wondrously bearded Greek Orthodox, Archbishop Gregorios. The flower-rota ladies in his church know where to turn their secateurs if they ever run short of gypsophila.

I was moved by the prayers of these colleagues—shades of Simon of Cyrene on Good Friday, or of loved ones urging a dreamer onwards in a vision of Heaven.

The Archdeacon of Canterbury, Sheila Watson, inducted him ‘by divine providence into the possession of the Archbishopric of Canterbury’. Lovely deep voice. Sir Donald Sinden could not have done it better.

A few cracking hymns: When I Survey The Wondrous Cross and The Church’s One Foundation went down best because everyone knew them. There was some foot shuffling during the Punjabi effort. ‘Chosen by the Dean,’ noted BBC2’s Huw Edwards, so we knew who to blame. The organ had been tuned specially for the service and growled like a Porsche.

Thomas Cranmer (it being the anniversary of his death) was mentioned more than once, as was his Prayer Book.

They marred his General Thanksgiving by saying ‘to us and to all’ instead of the more rhythmic ‘to us and to all men’.

And, shudder, there was a long, huggy exchanging of the peace. My late father always used to just say, ‘No thank you’. Archbishop Welby left to applause. Let us pray that it continues.



Justin Welby, newly enthroned Archbishop of Canterbury.