

Letter from the Clergy, September 9th 2022

Dear all

It was all so very different three short months ago. Over the weekend of Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June it shone, it rained, it shone again. Children made red, white and blue banners and learned all about the life and reign of Queen Elizabeth. Services of Thanksgiving and street parties took place all over the nation. We watched as the biggest stars of the day strutted their stuff outside Buckingham Palace, celebrities warmly congratulated the Queen on reaching 70 years on the throne and Lancaster Bombers flew over the vicarage in Comberton Avenue. Collectively it was like one of those nostalgic jigsaw puzzles that you see on display in garden centres.

It is a completely different atmosphere today. On 8th September in the early evening, we all heard the news that we knew must break sooner or later, but we did not really want to acknowledge. A long life well lived in no way diminishes the shock and grief at the passing of the Queen so suddenly. Even people who do not hold to the idea of monarchy often admit that they respected her work ethic and her tireless devotion to duty. People who have met her often remark that afterwards when they try to remember what she said to them or asked them they simply couldn't recall, such was the incredible effect she had on them.

For many people there was one particular time of the year when the Queen really came to prominence and that was through her annual Queen's Christmas Message. When she traditionally spoke at 3:00pm on Christmas Day, she invariably made reference to her Christian faith, not in a cold, distant, begrudging kind of way, but in a deeply personal manner that showed just how important and foundational her Christian faith was in all that she did.

Speaking in 2000, the Queen commented;

To many of us our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For me the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ's words and example.

In our modern society where everything is deemed to be relative, where it is held that it doesn't really matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and that if you do happen to have a Christian faith please do us all a favour and keep it to yourself, it was always refreshing to hear the Queen speaking openly about her own personal faith in Jesus and speaking in such a quiet, dignified way that few people ever complained when she did so. And of course the Queen lived this faith out in her daily life and duties, not perfectly by any means (who of us does?) but in a way that showed the world just what practical, loving, sacrificial Christian living really looked like.

One of the things that many people seem to be saying at this present time is that they cannot remember life before the Queen! It is only the oldest members of our community who can remember George VI and his death in 1952, and I guess that this reminds us that no matter how good or popular a Monarch turns out to be, nevertheless their time and their lives will come to an end. By comparison the God whom we serve is a King whose Kingdom never ends. The Queen realised this throughout her life and over her long reign she consciously aimed to model the values of the Eternal Kingdom of God in all that she said and did.

And so, both as individual Christians and as a parish, what can we learn from the Queen's Christian life and faith? Perhaps we can learn that duty, service to others and responsibility is all-important, and when based on a firm foundation of God's love, His commandments and His power, it becomes something much more profound and special. Secondly, we might reflect from the humble yet certain way that she would talk about her faith, not pushy, not aggressive, just warm, engaging and natural. For many of us our faith is the linchpin of all that we do and who we are, so let us learn to share it with others in a loving, natural and humble way. We may not move in Royal circles but we move in the circles in which God has placed us!

And so as the Elizabethan age comes to a close and we stand at the beginning of the reign of King Charles III let us thank God for the Queen, her life and her example and continue to pray for Charles as he takes on the challenging role of King now and in the years to come.

God bless you all.

Robert and David.