

Life of Queen Elizabeth II 1926 – 2022

Much has been very eloquently spoken about Queen Elizabeth II over the past few days. It is hard to find new things to say, but I felt I wanted, and had to, speak about her this morning.

The Queen's faith was central to her life, centred on Jesus Christ, so I have taken the letters of **CHRIST** to spell out some of her qualities.

C is for **Constant/Constancy**, which is faithfulness, and **Continuity**.

On her **21st birthday in 1947**, the Queen made a vow to serve God and her people: *'I declare before you all, that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong. But I shall not have strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in it with me. God help me to make good my vow.'* (p11 Faithful Queen book)

And she carried out her vow to the very end of her life.

At Christmas 2002 she said, *'I know how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings and to put my trust in God.'*

The Queen has been a constant presence in the life of our nation for over 70 years, that is through my entire life, and the whole existence of this church of St Aidan. Her steady influence, growing wisdom, and grace has been a still point in all the enormous changes that those years have brought. She indeed became the mother and grandmother of our nation, admired and loved by so many. We will miss her enormously.

H is for **Heart**, her **love**, firstly of **Prince Philip**, of whom she said, *'He is someone who doesn't take easily to compliments, but he has quite simply been my strength and stay all these years, and I owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim.'* (Faithful Queen p 47) Married for over 70 years, having to play second fiddle to his wife as queen, Philip was her *'strength and stay'*.

Her love for Philip extended to their children and grandchildren and great grandchildren. As with all families her children and grandchildren brought much joy, but also times of heartache to the Queen, challenging times which tested her love and resolve. As she said at Christmas in 2011, *'Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.'* And as she said of her *'annus horribilis'* in 1992, it was prayer that sustained her through such times.

The Queen's love extended to her dogs and horses too, with which she had special bonds.

Undergirding her whole life was her love of God, and that love she received from God.

R is for **Royal/Regal**. Through 70 years she came to define what it meant to be a monarch, adapting to all the changes of the world and society, yet always true to her values and calling. King Charles III has a hard act to follow, and needs our prayers.

I is for **Inspiration**. The Queen found inspiration in her faith. In preparation for her Coronation she prayed, *'O Christ our God, fill my heart always with the joy of faithful service.'* In her Christmas message in 2014 she said, *'For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is an inspiration and anchor in my life... Christ's example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people of whatever faith or none.'* What she received from God she sought to pass on in love for others. As she said in 1985 *'The story of the Good Samaritan reminds us of our duty to our neighbour. We should try to follow Christ's clear instruction at the end of that story: 'Go and do likewise.'*

S is for **Service**, her humble attitude towards her calling and other people.

At Christmas 2012 she said, *'This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only Son 'to serve, not to be served'. He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ.*

Also, at Christmas 2008 she said, *'I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life. He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.'*

Queen Elizabeth certainly lived out her faith in humble service of others.

T is for **Thankfulness**. In her role as Queen, she was required to meet millions of people. to visit countless institutions and projects, and each time to take the opportunity to say *'thank you'* to ordinary people. On behalf of us all she offered words of thanks and appreciation, which often meant so much to those who received them.

The Queen relied on Jesus throughout her life, and set an example of attending church each week wherever she was living. She has now fulfilled her vow to serve God and this nation all her life.

Let us give thanks to God for Queen Elizabeth, and commit ourselves to pray for our new King Charles. May he follow in his mother's faithful footsteps.