



Humble Address to Her Majesty The Queen on the death of her

My Lords, it's a privilege to follow four such eloquent speeches from the front benches and it is with great sadness and much sympathy that I convey from these Benches the condolences of the Lords Spiritual to Her Majesty the Queen and all her family on the death of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. In thousands of churches and homes around the nation and the world, yesterday as on every Sunday, prayers were said for the Queen. This weekend, we have also thanked God for Prince Philip's life of extraordinary service.

There are some rare people who bring energy to a room. The Duke of Edinburgh was such a person. His presence lifted a gathering, he may have challenged and interrogated but whatever he said, he never bored anyone.

One of the rites of passage for Diocesan Bishops newly in post has been to preach at Sandringham in January. One arrives on the Saturday evening. There is often a BBQ (yes, I do mean in North Norfolk in January) at which he cooked superbly. On the Sunday morning the Bishop preaches. Let me be very honest, I often can't remember my own sermons. Prince Philip listened intently, thought deeply and over lunch interrogated knowingly. His reading theologically was wide, his memory retentive, his analysis perceptive. Few Bishops failed to leave with greater thoughtfulness and few Bishops failed to admire. We quite often had to answer questions about what a Bishop had said in a sermon two or three weeks earlier, with which he disagreed - he was effectively polling the bench.

The Duke of Edinburgh had a profound moral imagination, extraordinary foresight and even vision. He did not see the world just as it is, but as what it could be and what it should be, worked out in his commitment to young people, especially through the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, to the Commonwealth, our Armed Forces, to engineering and technology and design, where he played a formative and important part, as well as conservation and the environment. In terms of Edmund Burke he had an instinctive sense that the social contract was found in the traditions we inherit from the past, in our obligations to the present and in our responsibility to those yet to be born.

His genuine and deep sense of humility and his service came from, I think, the same place. His faith. He had a sincere Christian faith, absolutely untainted by false piety, formed and developed by wrestling with great issues, refined by meeting such an extraordinary variety of people, around the Commonwealth and around the world, and learning about their lives. He understood how important faith is for the vast majority of the world's population.

He engaged the rich diversity of faiths within the UK and the Commonwealth, and was a pioneer in recognising the crucial role that faith leaders play in advocating for creation care. He was literally half a century ahead of his time in this area. His commitment to the present and future good of this nation and of the Commonwealth was reflected in technology and engineering, as an expression for him of our God-given intelligence and responsibility.

His service was a profound expression of his own faith. He knew who he was, and his faith was central to who he was and how he lived his life.

He worked out his call to serve and follow Christ in the context of his own unique calling. His life, his family, his work – these formed his vocation, especially his family and his service to Her Majesty. Yet he was always utterly true and authentic to himself. That mixture is a lesson for all, especially perhaps on these benches.

Much has been said in the last few days about an exceptional man of great service, duty and wit. It is of course Her Majesty and the Royal family who will remember him most dearly, and for all of them our prayer is that even as they walk in the valley of the shadow of death they will know that the good Shepherd is with them and upholding them.

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