

Read the Archbishop of Canterbury's Condolence Address to the House of Lords this morning on the death of Her Late Majesty The Queen.

As prepared for delivery.

My Lords, one of the greatest privileges of sitting on these benches, within a year or so of becoming a diocesan Bishop you're invited to spend a weekend at Sandringham and there, often in January, you go for a BBQ; fortitude. And, you have the enormous gift given to you of being able to spend time with Her Late Majesty, with her family, with the jigsaw puzzles and all the other things that are there.

And thus, on behalf of these benches I know from the conversations we have among ourselves that there is a profound sense of personal sorrow and an even more profound sense of the significance of the virtues, of the characteristics of The Late Queen.

What has been said already today has been extraordinarily eloquent and I don't intend to repeat that, but to say something about The Queen's links to faith and to the Church of England.

The first point of that is her assurance, her confidence in God who called her. At her Coronation, so long ago by Archbishop Jeffrey Fisher the first of seven Archbishops of Canterbury who had the privilege of serving her. At her Coronation, the service began with her walking by herself, past the throne where she would be seated and kneeling by the high altar of Westminster Abbey and the order of service said, she will kneel in private prayer and so she did, for some time and then the next thing that happened was that homage was made to her starting with the Duke of Edinburgh.

What that said was that her understanding of her role was that she pledged her allegiance to God, before others pledged their allegiance to her. She had this profound sense of who she was and by whom she was called.

And then there was a profound and deep and extraordinary theological vision. In 2012, she spoke at Lambeth Palace of the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee and the speech she made there is one that we return too very frequently because she set out there a vision of what an established church should be. It was not a vision of comfort and privilege, it was to say, put very politely, you are here as an umbrella for the whole people of this land. The subtext was that if you are not that, you are nothing.

That is a deep vision of what it is to be the church, of what it is to be not an established church but to be a Christian church. That came from her deep understanding of faith.

Every five years at the inauguration of the Church of England's General Synod she came with messages of encouragement and assurance of her

prayers. In 2021 her message was; my hope is that you will be strengthened with the certainty of the love of God as you work together and draw on the church's tradition of unity in fellowship for the tasks ahead.

Publicly, her Late Majesty worshipped regularly and spoke of her faith in God, particularly at her Christmas broadcast, with quiet, gentle confidence. Privately she was an inspiring and helpful guide and questioner to me and to my predecessors. She had a dry sense of humour as we've heard already and the ability to spot the absurd, the Church of England was very capable of giving her material!

But she never exercised that at the expense of others. Her memory, when I last saw her in June, was as sharp as it could ever have been. She remembered meetings from 40 – 50 years ago and drew on the lessons from those times to speak of today and what we needed to learn.

Assurance of the love of God in her call, and in humility. It would be easy as a Monarch to be proud but she was everything but that. It was her faith which gave her strength and she knew that but she knew also her call to be a servant, and the one whom she served and the nation she served, and the commonwealth and the world. Over the last 24 hours I've had so many messages from Archbishops, Bishops, other people from around the world in deep sense of loss. Within the commonwealth and way beyond it. From China, from Latin America from many other places.

It has been the privilege of those on these benches to be intimately involved with momentous occasions so often through the late majesty's life. She has been a presence as has been said, for as long as we can remember.

Jesus says in the gospel of St Matthew 'blessed are those mourn for they shall be comforted.' May God comfort all those who grieve her Late Majesty's loss and may God sustain His Majesty King Charles III in the enormous weight and challenges that he takes on immediately, at the same time as he bears the burden of grief and those around him in his family. May God hold Her late majesty in his presence firmly secured in the peace that passes far beyond our understanding.

4 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-writing/speeches/her-late-majesty-queen-archbishop-gives-condolence-address-lords>