



Neil Turner/Lambeth Palace

In a special BBC Radio 4 Thought for the Day to mark Accession Day, Archbishop Justin talks about loss and hope, drawing on his own experience. Read the full transcript here.

Good morning.

Today is Accession Day – the day we mark the anniversary of His Majesty becoming King. And of course, in doing so, we also remember his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

All such anniversaries are double edged. We look backwards and we look forwards. We feel sadness at the death of those we loved, and yet hope for the future, because the gifts they have given us survive after they have gone. Today we give thanks that the legacy of Queen Elizabeth – her obedience to God, her sense of duty, her love for her people – lives on.

Many of us will know well that ache of life continuing after death. Tuesday was my mother’s funeral. I loved her and will miss her very deeply.

I remember the words of a letter in the Bible, 1 Peter: ‘The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures for ever.’

So although my family will no longer enjoy her love, integrity, and other virtues, I will still see it in the faces of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Her friends will remember her courage and faithfulness.

For Christians throughout the world, today is also the feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the day when we celebrate the birth of Mary, the mother of Jesus, a servant of God whose obedience, faithfulness and courage continues to transform the world.

A peasant girl from an unknown town, who lived and died, grieved and hoped – just as we do today – and who made it possible for us to know the miracle of God working through human faith and obedience.

For various reasons, for me, this summer has been, in part, one of seeing suffering in friends and family. That will also be true for many listening. Some today will remember, not Kings and Queens, but their own loss. What can we say?

Most of all, we can say to them, “I love you, I will not abandon you”. The King spoke of the comfort he received from people being there and supporting. “To be with” is a precious gift. Mary was with Jesus from conception until crucifixion. Christians believe that God, through Jesus is with those who suffer, through others, or just there.

Today we remember a King who pledged to serve, and a Queen who gave us hope. And we give thanks, because hope and service, with love, are the path to flourishing communities.

About the image: The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby, reading the Coronation Bible, commissioned for King Charles III, in the Cranmer Study at Lambeth Palace, London, on 20th April 2023. The Cranmer Study is believed to be the room where Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who served King Henry VIII, compiled the Book of Common Prayer. First published in 1549, the Book of Common Prayer still forms the basis of all worship in Anglican churches today. The Cranmer Study, which overlooks the altar of Lambeth Palace Chapel, is where Archbishop Cranmer studied, wrote and prayed. To this day it is still very much the Archbishop's private sanctuary where he studies, writes and prays.

Listen back to the broadcast.

3 min read

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