

Start:Stop Reflection, St Stephen Walbrook
Tuesday 13th September 2022
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Hello and welcome to St Stephen Walbrook and our Start:Stop reflection, when we start the day by stopping for ten minutes in prayer and reflection. Please come and go as your schedule dictates.

The world is mourning the death of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II; monarch, Supreme Governor of The Church of England and perhaps one of, if not the most prominent advocate for the Christian faith in recent times.

It is difficult to put into words the loss of someone known to 94% of the population of the globe - the single most visually recorded human being in history.

So, rather than my words, this morning's reflection uses her own. Words of wisdom drawn from just some of the public statements and Christmas Broadcasts she gave over her long reign.

Reflection

I have lived long enough to know that things never remain quite the same for very long. (CB 2006)

Life...consists of final partings as well as first meetings (CB 2021). Nothing that can be said can begin to take away the anguish and the pain of these moments. Grief is the price we pay for love (9/11 Statement 2001).

Joy and sadness are part of all our lives. Indeed, the poet William Blake tells us that:

"Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine,
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine."

But out of... disaster [comes] opportunities for..... people to display their....faith in the future. Being united - that is, feeling a unity of purpose - is the glue that bonds [us] together... Without it, the parts are only fragments of a whole; with it, we can be much more than the sum of those fragments. (CB 1997).

As so often in our lives at times of tragedy - just as on occasions of celebration and thanksgiving - we look to the Church to bring us together as a nation or as a community in commemoration and tribute.

It is to the Church that we turn to give meaning to these moments of intense human experience through prayer, symbol and ceremony.

In these circumstances so many of us, whatever our religion, need our faith more than ever to sustain and guide us. Every one of us needs to believe in the value of all that is good and honest; we need to let this belief drive and influence our actions. (CB 2001)

Over the years, those who have seemed to me to be the most happy, contented and fulfilled have always been the people who have lived the most outgoing and unselfish lives; the kind of people who are generous with their talents or their time. (CB 2008)

Their lives frequently embody a truth expressed by Saint Teresa of Calcutta [who] once said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." (CB 2016)

The true measure of Christ's influence is not only in the lives of the saints but also in the good works quietly done by millions of men and women day in and day out throughout the centuries. (CB 2000)

Jesus Christ lived obscurely for most of his life, and never travelled far. He was maligned and rejected by many, though he had done no wrong. And yet, billions of people now follow his teaching and find in him the guiding light for their lives. I am one of them because Christ's example helps me see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe. (CB 2016)

His great emphasis was to give spirituality a practical purpose. (CB 2000)

As I look to the future I have no doubt... that the one certainty is change - and the pace of that change will only seem to increase....But I do not think that we should be over-anxious. We can make sense of the future - if we ...draw from our...constant and unchanging values which have stood the test of time.... Fairness and compassion, justice and tolerance; these are the landmarks from the past which can guide us through the years ahead.

At the centre of our lives - today and tomorrow - must be the message of caring for others, the message at the heart of Christianity and of all the great religions. (CB 1999)

I know just how much I rely on my own 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. (CB 2002)

Meditation

In her 2013 Christmas broadcast, Queen Elizabeth said: 'For Christians, as for all people of faith, reflection, meditation and prayer help us to renew ourselves in God's love, as we strive daily to become better people.' (CB 2013)

Let us act on her guidance and spend a few moments in silence before we pray.

Blessing

We bring this reflection to a close with the words of blessing Her Late Majesty chose to conclude her Christmas Broadcast in the year 2000, which, she explained, summarises the whole Christian message' and, if I may be so bold to say, her own life;

'Go forth into the world in peace,
be of good courage,
hold fast that which is good,
render to no man evil for evil,
strengthen the faint-hearted,
support the weak,
help the afflicted,
honour all men.' (CB 2000)
Amen.

Thank you for joining us for this Start:Stop reflection. The church remains open for prayer and reflection during the period of national mourning. A service of Thanksgiving for the life of Her Late Majesty will be held here on Thursday lunchtime at 12.45pm with beautiful music from our choir. Please read or write your own message in the book of condolence and light a candle and stay to pray and reflect for as long as you wish. This reflection will be repeated again on the quarter hour.