

Reflection for 18th. April

1 Corinthians ch. 13

And now I show you the best way of all.

Suppose I speak in the languages of human beings and of angels. If I don't have love, I am only a resounding gong or a noisy cymbal. Suppose I have the gift of prophecy. Suppose I can understand all the secret things of God and know everything about him. And suppose I have enough faith to move mountains. If I don't have love, I am nothing at all. If I give all that I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is Patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This weekend the funeral of His Royal Highness Prince Philip will take place at St. George's Chapel, Windsor and as we both celebrate his life and mourn his death I am reminded of the words that St. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth in chapter 13 of his first letter. This letter is often called "the love chapter of the bible" and is often used at wedding services.

This last week it was also read at a funeral that I took, and I reflected on how these words of St. Paul related to the "life well lived of Prince Philip" and I thought that it said so much about his life and service;

Firstly, and most importantly his love for his wife and family – there are times in all families when love and service plays an even more important role – we will all remember the Queen talking about her "annus horribilis" – it's at times like this that we need the strength of our partners and families – at that strength only comes through love and service.

Secondly, Prince Philip loved and served his country and the Commonwealth not just through his navy service, but also through all the many many organisations he both founded and led forward to help make lives better for millions of people, particularly young people through the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. But most importantly of all he served his country by serving and supporting the queen in her role in serving us in her reign over us.

Not an easy role for someone of his generation – but he performed it with both dignity and courtesy (and often also a sense of fun) because he loved the Queen and loved this country that he served.

All funerals are difficult at this time with restrictions on numbers for services and many families have felt unable to give their loved ones a service they would have wanted, this restriction will of course affect the funeral of Prince Philip – however it may give the Royal Family the opportunity to mourn him in a more intimate family service rather than the large state occasion that it might have been.

Personally I am cheered by the number of weddings I am booked to take over the summer in various churches (14 in total), and it is wonderful to be alongside couples as they plan to celebrate their love for each other by exchanging their vows before God in church. Some couples have had to postpone their weddings twice, but their love has persevered, as St. Paul wrote “Love always perseveres”

This time of lockdown has brought us many challenges – but it has also brought the gift of love and service in our villages and communities – and I hope and pray that sense of supporting each other continues as we are able to meet up and hopefully can begin to live more normal lives.

A Prayer for the life of Prince Philip.

God of Majesty
 Give rest to your servant Philip
 Who having served his Queen and country,
 Has passed from this life,
 Full of years and strong in spirit.
 As we give thanks for his life,
 As Prince and husband,
 As consort and family man,
 We pray that all he has done
 Will continue to bear fruit
 In the lives of individuals,
 And the life of this nation,
 To your honour and glory
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
 Amen.

**We look forward to seeing you at our communion service this Sunday at 9am. at Flecknoe.
 We will continue these weekly reflections until we celebrate Trinity Sunday at the end of May, by which time I hope and pray that life may be more normal for us all.**

Please do contact me for any prayer requests, or if you would value a chat about anything.

With my love and blessings for you all and all that you do.

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