

Jesus said" Peace be with you"

In July 1997 Karen and I were spending our honeymoon on the beautiful Greek Island of Corfu. As well as relaxing and enjoying the sunshine we visited the comparatively modest palace of Mon Repos, formerly a summer residence of the Greek Royal Family. There we discovered it was the birthplace of the baby who was to become Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In the last few days our media have been full of recollections of the life of service and duty that has come to an end with the death of Prince Philip. His Royal Highness has been so much part of our national life and has travelled the length of the Kingdom and Commonwealth. I am sure that many of us have our own family stories of the Prince.

My own father was presented to Prince Philip when he visited his factory in Aberdare during the 1970s. His interest in industry and the working lives of ordinary people was apparent then and in many similar occasions. I first saw him when he came to Llandaff Cathedral with HM the Queen celebrating the Silver Jubilee in 1977. An experience which was mirrored in 2012 when the Royal couple came again to Llandaff for the Diamond Jubilee. On that occasion Lydia and Sophie presented the official welcome bouquet. A magic moment for our family. The girls as they have become teenagers have like so many others enjoyed taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme which has enhanced the lives of millions.

Karen and I had already seen the Duke of Edinburgh close up on a beautiful June day in 2010. We had been invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. The gardens were delightful, the music from the military bands was superb and the tea delicious . The abiding memory however we have was the extraordinary energy of the Duke and the Queen as they went about chatting with crowds of invited guests thrilled at the humour and affability of the Prince. The time they spent talking to people and making unforgettable memories will be recalled by countless thousands.

The mystique and majesty of the Royal life has been commented on extensively in the past days but we can also recall that the Duke was a son, brother, grandfather, father and above all a devoted husband. We as members of the family of our nation can sympathise with our beloved Queen and her family at this time of loss for them which will be keenly felt. The monarch herself has like all of us known bereavement and has famously said that grief is the price we pay for love. This is perhaps all the more poignant for her as she recalls more than seventy years of marriage and the love and support they shared in life with all its joys and sorrows. The Queen quoted that well known evening hymn 'O strength and stay' when describing her consort's constant care and devotion to her.

The Prince was also a deeply thoughtful man and practiced his Christian faith with quiet devotion alongside the Queen not only in large public acts of worship but also in quiet Sundays in the simple churches at Sandringham and Balmoral. Those clergy who preached at services often comment that he would listen carefully and quiz them on their addresses. He also had an awareness of the claims of other world religions and was respectful and sympathetic to people of faith from all nations. His love of the natural world , the animal kingdom and his support of environmental concerns came from his belief in God the creator of the world. The Prince encourages us all to treasure the gift of the earth which is our home.

At this Eastertide all of us within the worldwide family of the Church are celebrating the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The new life we have in Christ is for living life to the full now but it is also a reminder that we will eventually have the hope for eternal life in God's presence. Jesus words to the disciples was the assurance of peace, a profound sense of wellbeing in the household of faith. A peace we pray will be known by the Royal Family at this time and will given to Prince Philip and all the faithful departed.