

Today I want to concentrate on the mood of the nation and how we are all feeling at the loss of such a wonderful Monarch.

May I speak in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is only a few short weeks since the celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee. The mood of the nation was one of huge celebration. Nothing has matched it in many years.

People gathered outside Buckingham Palace. There was a huge outpouring of love and thankfulness. There were church services and gatherings thanking God for her service, and for her faithfulness to her vows. There were street and park parties all over the UK, the commonwealth and in other parts of the world. It all showed just how much our Queen was loved and respected.

I am so pleased that she was able to see that, and to recognise just how much she meant to the people she had served all of her life.....

Scenes at Buckingham Palace, following the announcement of her death, were very different. People walked aimlessly in the dark and the rain, feeling disorientated, lost, sad and crying..... What a contrast.

On Friday the interviews with people on TV and in the streets have revealed what people thought of her and felt about her in a more passionate way, recognising it more deeply in their loss. Perhaps many of us have been very surprised about our reactions to losing her. I know I have.

Like Liz Truss said 'She was the rock on which our country was built'. She was Mother of our nation. The depth of feeling towards her is tangible. Within a minute of her death there were millions of phone calls made. People passing on the news, people shocked, needing to talk to someone as they would on hearing about the death of a family member.....

All of us have experienced a time when unexpectedly the electricity has failed. Everything stops. The TV goes off. The radio goes silent. The cooker goes cold. The lift jerks to a halt and worst of all, the lights go out, and we are plunged into darkness. And for a while at least, we might feel helpless, maybe even frightened.....

The death of our Queen feels like a blackout. One minute the sun is shining. The next minute it is dark. Without any warning or chance to

prepare ourselves, we are plunged into impenetrable darkness. In the space of a moment, our world as we know it has been turned upside down.....

At a very deep level we admired her. Few people are able to give the years of unflinching service which she has given, right to the very end, where we saw moving pictures of her inviting Liz Truss to form a government.

She has been an example to us all, and many of us didn't realise we loved her until the shattering news of her death...

Queen Elizabeth lived an exemplary Christian life, one that many of us wish or hope to follow. Her life was one of great faith. She made it clear in her Christmas broadcasts and other speeches, as well as her regular commitment to worship Sunday by Sunday. She lived in the strength and light of Christ.

It was through HIM, that she grew from being a nervous young woman to be a confident, wise Monarch that we knew her to be. Queen Elizabeth grew into her role in the way that God planned for her.....

In our distress at losing her there is only one thing we can do.

Just as when a blackout occurs, we rush for the light, any light, even the light of a humble candle, so now we rush to the only light that can penetrate this awful darkness, namely the light of Christ.....

We are told in the gospel that as Christ died 'darkness came over the whole land until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed'.

This means that his friends experienced what we are experiencing now. They felt lost and disorientated. Their hopes and dreams crumbled.

They didn't know that the darkness would NOT have the last say, and that Christ's light would shine again.....

It feels marvellous when after a blackout the lights come on again. It must have been wonderful for the disciples when on Easter day they walked once again in the light of Christ. Not quite the old light. It was even brighter. It was the light of their risen Lord who broke the chains of death and rose in triumph from the grave.

Our Queen was someone who left a legacy of light, whose faithfulness to God and her country will never be forgotten. The history books will praise her as a brilliant monarch and an exemplary Christian. Someone who served her Lord, who gave her the strength and resources to

spend her life in faithfulness to the vows she made to the nation before him.

It is said that Elizabeth prayed that her parents would have a son so that she wouldn't have to become Queen. When that didn't happen, she embraced her destiny and it became obvious that this was her calling from God.....

Our new King Charles has had a good teacher and mentor and excellent preparation for his role, but it will undoubtedly be daunting for him and overwhelming. So we need to pray for him, and Camila the Queen Consort, that they may live and rule in the light of Christ as did Elizabeth.....

Apparently rainbows appeared in the sky above Buckingham palace and Windsor Castle just as our Queen died. A rainbow is a sign of hope. I am sure that the Queen's hope was in the eternal life she was promised by the God she served so well. Probably our new Kings' hope is that he will be a good monarch, inspired by the example of his mother. My hope, inspired by looking closely at Queen's Elizabeth life in these last days, is to become more like Christ and to serve him and know him better.

What is your hope as you live through this time of darkness?

AMEN

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