



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 6th February 2022 – 70th Anniversary of the Queen's Accession
Readings: 1 Peter 2:11-17 and St Matthew 22: 16-22
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Living by one's principles and sticking to them

'Never complain; never explain.' This is reputed to be one of the principles by which the Queen lives. By so doing, she lives graciously and sincerely and, the result is that she is deeply respected by not only her immediate subjects but people globally. In one sense, it's a practical strategy to live through changing times, in what can often be an uncompromising and confrontational world.

The Queen, in her very moving Platinum Jubilee Statement issued yesterday refers to the broadcast she made on her 21st Birthday, when she was still a princess. Little could the Queen have imagined when she said then, "I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service", that the service she would give, would be far longer than any monarch before her. In a way, her aspiration is illustrative of the extract that we heard read earlier from the Epistle of Peter, which urged the early Christians to give honourable service, even if a slave, and never to complain about the treatment they received but to submit to their station in life. To our ears this sounds discordant with modern thinking. However, before the days of human rights were inscribed in legislation, the intention was to win respect from those they served to make their owners pause and reflect from whence their strength came. Similarly, the Queen does not challenge parliament but serves, irrespective. The Queen does not issue explanatory broadcasts contradicting erroneous circulations but serves the nation, despite all.

How to keep calm and carry on

What enables the Queen to be staunch in service, and keep going? The love she shared with Prince Philip was evident, when she said in a speech "Quite simply, he has been my strength and stay". Doubtless, he was the only one who she could tell exactly what was on her mind and know, that it would go no further. Since his death, she has also lost two of her trusted, long-serving ladies-in-waiting who too, must have learned some of her innermost thoughts. Such is the drawback, one could say, of out-living your nearest and dearest.

The Queen, however, has always drawn strength from a far higher source than earthly companions. She has often stated in her Christmas speeches how greatly she is supported by her faith. The Gospel of St Matthew evidences how Jesus too, had to tread that fine line of not complaining nor explaining. He is approached by the Herodians, who were scriptural scholars and subservient associates of the Pharisees. They seek to entrap Jesus into declaring opposition to the Roman Empire. They ask in a devious manner, seemingly

flattering Jesus for teaching the way of God, a question to which they consider there can be no lawful answer. They ask 'Is it lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor, or not?' Jesus' response is masterful. He asks to see a coin. We understand the illustration he makes, for our own coins display the Queen's head. He says to the Herodians, "Whose head is that?" They reply, "The Emperor's". Jesus then silences them by stating, "Give, therefore, to the Emperor, the things that are his and to God, the things that are God's."

The genius of Jesus' comment is that he seemingly does not deny the Emperor's earthly authority but equally, he has pointed to God's sovereignty over everything. How come? Well, the Herodians being scholars of scripture would have known that, 'In the beginning God created them male and female after his own image'. No wonder the Herodians slink away. Before them stood the divine, sovereign servant. The Herodians realised that they had been hoist by their own petard.

Living by example

The Queen is our earthly, sovereign servant. Not only do we recognise this from the years of devoted service she has given to us all, but she, herself, has reaffirmed this in her Platinum Jubilee Statement. She has signed it very simply 'Your Servant, Elizabeth R.' Above all, the Queen is also, our example of knowing where true, ultimate sovereignty lies. As the Gospel says, 'Render to God, the things that are God's.' We may not live as long as the Queen but whether our lives be long or short, like her may we too, serve through Christ our divine, servant King. Amen.