



THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

A Pastoral Letter to the Teulu Asaph from the Bishop
September 2022

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hen I left for the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches on 30th August, we had a woman Sovereign and a male Prime Minister. When I returned this weekend, everything had changed. The upheaval and buzz of a new Government is enough to fill our news agendas, but the death of a monarch – especially one who has served for seventy years – eclipses all else. People have talked about their immense sadness at this time, but I’m not entirely sure that “sadness” is the right word. I have been profoundly moved, but we are talking of the death of a woman who has lived to the age of ninety-six, who has lived a good life, full of fulfilment, and who was a woman of faith, whose reliance of the grace of Christ was evident in her life. If ever the words of the funeral service, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”, could be appropriately applied, it is now on the death of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

I am moved by a sense of loss, because in The Queen we had perhaps the most influential leader of modern times. Unable to pass laws or command troops – although both things were done in her name – she had what has been called “soft power”, the glamour and influence of her position, and the garnered wisdom of being acquainted with fifteen British Prime Ministers, thirteen Presidents of the United States, and five popes. I am also moved, because in so many ways, we all felt we knew the Queen. We invited her into our homes every Christmas Day, we heard and saw her on countless occasions. Although most of us never really got near – I had one brief conversation – she felt as familiar as a member of the family.

All this meant that the Queen had immense prestige. She was able to speak for the nation, she could act as the spokesperson of our values, our anxieties, and articulate the moral and spiritual qualities we needed to marshal in order to overcome them. She influenced society, and made countless people feel important. She did the thing she promised, and served her country almost to her last breath.

In my school magazine, every year there was a section “The Old Order Changeth”. It recorded outgoing and incoming prefects and Head Students, those who left for university, or new members of staff and such things. We cannot fail to be conscious of the sea change taking place before our very eyes. The King is already making his mark, after a seamless transition of succession. He has acted with all the dignity, precision and notes of loyalty and service that we could hope for. We have a new Prime Minister, Mrs Truss, who remains an unknown quantity, as she takes a back seat for the public ceremonies surrounding the death of one monarch and the succession of another. What happens next in the evolution of our national life will be of immense importance, as it will shape our future.

I hope that the example of Queen Elizabeth II will shape the future. Her unstinting service, and quiet compassion, her intuitive understanding of the nation and the demands of the Constitution, mean that she will forever have made her mark on British history. These are qualities for the new King to adopt and for our political leaders to observe. When King Charles addressed the nation the other evening, he also said something significant about the work of the new Prince and Princess of Wales. He spoke of them “helping to bring the marginal to the centre ground where vital help can be given”. It was Our Lord who always in his ministry brought people from the edges into the centre of society. He reached out to others whom society had rejected, and asserted the importance and value of every single individual. If our Royal Family, and our politicians, can live by this principle, then there is hope for the future.

As a family of Christians, it is our duty to pray for those who lead us – for those who hold the levers of power, and those who are symbolic of our national life. Please keep King Charles – and his government – in your prayers. May the poorest find succour, and the oppressed find justice – through the service, policies and commitment of those who lead us.



(The Funeral Hatchment for HM The Queen at the head of this letter was designed by Lee Lumbley)