

Homily 24th Sunday Year C – during National mourning for the Queen 2022

A reflection on HM Queen Elizabeth II by Christy Thomas.

At her Golden Jubilee 10 years ago, my oldest son had an office on the top floor of a six-story building that overlooked St. James Park and the Thames River. We gathered there to watch the royal regatta pass while watching the TV footage of the celebration projected on a large screen.

It was a typical British late spring day: chilly, grey, rainy. No day for being outside, although that did not stop the thousands from filling the walkways next to the Thames to catch a glimpse of their beloved Queen Elizabeth II.

I, warm and comfortable, watched amazed as this woman, then 86, stood for hours in chilly, damp weather, not, to my Texas eye, dressed with any particular warmth or protection, and waved endlessly at the crowds.

In that moment, Queen Elizabeth offered to me and to the world a model of grace, toughness, humble awareness of her responsibilities and privileges, faithfulness, and unending integrity.

Would that each of us could honestly display such qualities of character! I often wonder what the world would look like if all leaders first had to demonstrate integrity; second, faithfulness to the assigned/elected task; and third, the toughness of character necessary to stick with their calling in life, no matter how difficult, boring, repetitive, or unwelcome some parts of it may be.

In the many weeks and months that I've spent with my son and his family in England, I was able to see up close the deep love that the British have for their Queen. Many things might divide them, but Queen Elizabeth II had the strength of character to rise above the divisions and squabbles and hold everyone together.

Surely, God's hand was indeed upon her. What is more, she chose to stay under that holy hand even when the weight of it seemed unbearable.

What a gift she has been to us. May the peace of God comfort all who mourn this amazing woman as she now stands in the fullness of love and holy light.

We do not often think of mercy in this way but the Queen offers one of the best images we can ever have of mercy in action. It inspires and promotes integrity, faithfulness to the mission and that toughness of character needed to persevere to the end. We see this in Jesus, persevering in his task to set us free because he loved us deeply. Queen Elizabeth has been a living reminder of the mercy of God.

Aged 13 Elizabeth handed a Christian poem to her father which read: *"Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way."* Queen Elizabeth lived those words to the end!

What better way to send you forth but with these words spoken by the Queen at Christmas 2014: *"For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and anchor in my life. A role model of reconciliation and forgiveness, He stretched out his hands in love acceptance and healing. Christ's example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people of whatever faith or none."*