

## **Given at the Requiem Mass for Prince Philip on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at Westminster Cathedral**

Today our Royal Family is grieving. Their beloved Prince Philip has died, their faithful rock. Today we mourn his death. We pray for him, and for every member of that family, but especially for Her Majesty the Queen.

Every family in grief needs comfort and support, and none more so than a grieving wife, our Queen. May our prayers contribute to her comfort and support.

I recall so clearly the words of her Christmas Message to us all last year. She said: 'The teachings of Christ have always served as my inner light.' How much she will cherish that inner light today! How much we pray that this light of Christ will give her consolation, warmth and hope.

Her message last Christmas was about darkness and light. She spoke of the darkness of the months of almost total lockdown that we were living through at that time. She spoke of 'Jesus, the light of the world' and the light given by so many who, in selfless duty put the lives of others above their own.

Surely these words of Her Majesty may be applied to her beloved husband, Prince Philip. His long, long life is marked by many achievements. They are being gratefully recalled in these days: achievements for young people, for engineering, for the environment, in the defence of our nation, for so many charitable causes. Yet it is for his selfless loyalty to the Queen and his tireless, generous sense of duty and service for which we give the most heartfelt thanks. Inspired by his Christian faith, and, I believe, by the example of his extraordinary mother, Princess Alice, the service given by Prince Philip will long be an inspiration to us all. Little wonder that, as they celebrated their Golden Jubilee, Her Majesty spoke of him as her 'constant strength and stay'.

His long life has also been marked by great sadness and difficulties, as is often the case in family life. Yet, for this family, it has all been played out in the glare of publicity. I hope there is much consolation in the words of St Paul when he says: 'I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is

waiting for us', the freedom and glory of the children of God (Rom.8.18-21).

An abiding memory of mine is the sight of Prince Philip, standing for hours on end, upright and alert, in the cold and pouring rain on that long celebratory Pageant on the River Thames, marking the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. How he must have longed to take shelter. But he did not. A steadfast and indomitable spirit marked every one of his seventy years of service. For this we thank God and pray that he may now rest in peace.

But peace and rest are not the whole story. No, the promises made by Jesus and handed on to us by St John, are more rich and fulfilling. Jesus says: 'This is the will of him who sent me that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me' (John 6.39). Yes, nothing of the gifts given to this Prince Philip, from his strength of spirit, sharpness of phrase, kindness of heart, shall be lost. Indeed the promise of Jesus is so explicit: 'It is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and that I shall raise him up on the last day' (John 6.40). This promise of the Lord is made good, guaranteed, by his victory over death, celebrated in this Easter Feast. Yes, he is risen. He alone has the ultimate victory over death. He alone is able and so willing to share this victory with every one of us.

This is the fullness of the light brought into the world by Jesus. It is a light that brings hope, even in the darkest night, as Her Majesty said last Christmas. This light and hope, we pray, will now soften the sadness of our Royal Family and lead them through the darkness of their loss and grief.

I pray that as we too mourn the loss of His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, we too will remember these promises of the Lord and cling to them in steadfast hope. We are saddened by his going; we thank God for the gifts given to us through his example; we are strong in our faith that he will rise to the life of glory in the presence of God, the glory for which he has been created. Therein lies everlasting royalty, everlasting praise, everlasting joy.

Eternal rest grant to him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.