

June 2022: Platinum Jubilee

As I write this, across our nation people are preparing to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee; 70 years of the Queen's reign. Yet, apart from an extra long bank holiday weekend, and a chance for lots of wonderful community events, what exactly are we celebrating?

I find it slightly odd to reflect that the majority of our nation's population, like me, will be unable to remember a time before Queen Elizabeth's accession. Official statements speak of the Queen's 'service to the nation,' and in my experience such phrases are almost guaranteed to produce heated discussion sooner or later, as people bring different understandings of how the royal family contribute to, and receive from, our nation.

As an individual, I willingly offer total and unconditional obedience to God. As a Church of England minister, I have also vowed an oath of allegiance to the Queen and her successors, as head of the Church of England. However, the allegiance I give to the Queen is very different from my obedience to God. I do not consider the Queen or the royal family to be without fault, nor do I consider any human being to be worthy of my worship. But my oath of allegiance does require my loyalty. For me, that is about an awareness of - and a patience with - the reality that positions of great authority and responsibility are held by flawed human beings. I seek to balance the reality of the Queen and her successors as people, subject to the same influences as all of us, with loyalty to the position they hold. I believe this balancing of reality with loyalty towards something that may be more hoped for than seen, is characteristic of Christianity itself. Easter calls Christians to constantly to balance the reality of the world they see around them, with an abiding belief in redemption and resurrection.

People close to the Queen speak of her faithfulness, and of how she is supported by her Christian faith. Unlike most of us, the Queen has no choice about the faith she expresses publicly, but I wonder if for her too, there is something about reality and loyalty? Maybe she too has to balance the reality of her own views about our nation, with the requirement to be a loyal figurehead, both at home and abroad? And to do so for a life time.

So my prayer for us all this month is that whether we are an ardent royalist, or an ardent republican, we will use the Queen's Jubilee as an opportunity to reflect on what faithfulness, and loyalty, and allegiance, mean for us; to reflect on where we are prepared to give our hearts and our minds.

Yours in Christ,
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