

Summer Series @ CCEpsom

Exploring themes from

OUR QUEENS FAITH



Following the Platinum Jubilee, we decided to focus further on '*Our Faithful Queen*' and the prayers and values that have guided HM Queen Elizabeth II through her long reign.

This now feels quite timely and poignant following her death.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

21st April 1926 – 8th September 2022

'Duty'

(Luke 2:21-40)

I remember making my promise as a Brownie aged 7.

"I promise that I will do my best, to do my duty to God, to serve the Queen and help other people and to keep the (Brownie) Guide Law."

Words that I then repeated as a Guide, then as a young leader most memorably in Canterbury Cathedral, and finally as a Guider.

I note that these words have since been amended to

"I promise that I will do my best, to be true to myself and develop my beliefs, to serve the Queen and my community, to help other people and to keep the (Brownie) Guide Law."

The word 'Duty' has been dropped, maybe it's an unfashionable concept, but I understand the need to be more inclusive.

When I was ordained like Esther 2 weeks ago I swore the Declaration of Assent which included canonical obedience to the bishop as well as to the Sovereign.

So I feel that, I contain within my very being a sense of contractual obligation to God, the Queen, and our Bishop, alongside the vows I made to my husband 29 years ago. Therefore, I feel I understand a bit about duty but acknowledge that my personal experience might not be someone else's.

Many people might understand duty in terms of roles and responsibilities maybe even associating it with tasks in church. I hear phrases like, I'm on side persons duty, the coffee rota, intercessions, whatever it might be. In a household different people might have differing duties that they operate, that play to people's strengths and talents. Socially we all have civic duties to vote and uphold the laws of the land, so I'm guessing that each of us can access this theme on one level or another.

None of us however have grown up knowing our destiny was to be Sovereign. For Queen Elizabeth 2 her life was turned upside down with the abdication of her uncle and it has impacted not only her own childhood but that of her offspring.

Duty is one of the many themes that have characterised her life and she often writes or speaks about it.

“I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.”

In ‘*Our Faithful Queen*’ which explores some of the prayers the young Queen used in preparing for her coronation she recalls seeing the price her father had paid in accepting the duties of kingship. In preparing for her Coronation, when life would change forever for the couple, the Queen gave thanks to God for her family, for the memory of her father, for her mother and sister, for her husband, her children, and her home.

And she prayed, *“Lord, be thou my strength, and my husband’s and let us, united in thy faith and fear, help one another to fulfil the ceaseless duties of our calling faithfully and well.”*

The duties of the Queen have indeed been ceaseless. Even when she takes time out in Balmoral or Sandringham, the Government’s red boxes are still a daily responsibility. She has needed God’s refreshment and grace, that she may *“continue thine forever and daily increase in the Holy Spirit more and more, until we come to thy everlasting kingdom through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

By accepting her role, the Queen sacrificed her personal preference and private life to adopt a life of duty and service in obedience to God’s call trusting him to lead her.

At morning prayer this week, we have been reading about how Hannah dedicated her longed-for child to God. The boy Samuel, we later learn also begins to tune his ear to God’s call. This story might have been in Mary and Joseph’s mind when they take their son along to the Temple on the eighth day. Circumcision was part of the Jewish religious custom along with the ritual purification of the mother and they make the customary offerings that accompany this tradition. These were their duties.

There is much ritual associated with a Coronation, but it is the anointing that makes it possible for a humble human being to become God’s representative. At an ordination this is symbolised by the laying on of hands. Both Simeon and Anna recognised

something about the child Jesus that was different and set him apart for a specific task. We are fully aware that Jesus' destiny was the cross and he undertook his duty with the obedience and trust that our Queen has modelled her life upon.

We are fortunately not all called to be Queen, but we are called to be faithful to God's call on our life. I have previously defined duty as a contractual obligation or obedience, and these are not glib phrases but mere inadequate linguistic attempts to identify a deep-seated truth. Duty cuts to the heart of what people recognise as important.

Cicero, an early Roman philosopher who discusses duty in his work "On Duty", suggests that duties can come from four different sources:

1. as a result of being a human
2. as a result of one's particular place in life (one's family, one's country, one's job)
3. as a result of one's character
4. as a result of one's own moral expectations for oneself

The word duty comes from "due" meaning "that which is owing" and is a commitment or expectation to perform some action in general or if certain circumstances arise.

Consequently, in rocking up to church each week we are demonstrating a commitment not just to the fellowship but hopefully the reason why we worship – *the debt of love that is owed*, as we have just sung. Such a powerful phrase and the reason why that song is one of my favourites. For me turning out in the rain to a polling station is an acknowledgement of the sacrifice of the suffragettes whether I agree with the politics of the day or not. I wonder what it that motivates you most in life?

Last week we sang about '*seeing the purposes of God revealed in this generation*' and it's been going through my mind a lot. Simeon and Anna waited in the Temple until their old age until they saw the '*salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.*'

They wanted to know that salvation was possible, and Jesus we know has achieved it. The Queen has simply wanted like me in my Brownie promise to do her best for

this country and the Commonwealth, I think she has achieved that. What might we want when we pray for the kingdom of God now - in our generation, and what will our role in achieving it be? Is this our duty? To help create a church where people of all ages reach their full potential as disciples and leaders, cheering one another on in the adventure of following Jesus. Surely this is our calling, and we can follow in the example of her Majesty in making it reality. Amen.

RAD

'Forgiveness'

(Luke 15:11-32)

We have all probably heard that story of the Prodigal or Lost Son many times. It could even be described as one of the foundation texts of faith for many of us. The absolute joy in knowing that God as father rejoices when someone returns to him is the amazing grace that we sang about in our first hymn. Possibly we have also gone as far as to imagine ourselves in this story identifying which character we relate to most. Are we the younger wayward son wanting to test the boundaries, or the older faithful son who is jealous at the attention his brother receives? Today I would encourage us to look at this story in another way through the lens of 'Holiday at Home'

If you are not going away anywhere this summer you might be feeling jealous or resentful of those who do so. There maybe sadness as memories of holidays in previous years come to mind, maybe of friends or relatives no longer with us or children all grownup having their own adventures. Regrets and insecurities can easily creep in and get under our skin without us realising them. With the cost-of-living rising holidays are going to be even more of a luxury thing in the future.

Sometimes when on holiday the intensity of time spent with friends or relatives can also explode. Tempers can fray simply because you are not used to being together. I guess many might have experiences of arguing with siblings, bickering, or getting fractious on long car journeys or perceived inequalities in attention or affection. Throughout Lockdown many of us have been conscious that for those in abusive relationships there might be added danger or pressure which might also intensify when on holiday. Plus, it is well documented that whilst on holiday peoples inhibitions

reduce likewise exposing them to risk. The younger son drank excessively and slept around, sadly a common feature of some holiday experiences. Desperation can correspondingly cause people to do unimaginable things like eating the pigs food.

This parable of the Lost Son is often renamed the parable of the Forgiving father and its this value of forgiveness that is our theme for today taking examples from our Queen's faith. When we look at her life lived in the public eye and the media attention attracted by members of her family, we can only imagine what pain and anguish this might cause. We remember how she had to dig deep to remain composed through her famously horrible year, alongside other recent personal events. Consequently, the prayer she prayed before her coronation remains pertinent.

Lord, give us grace never to betray thy truth and never to deny thy love, but by thy guidance in every dealing with our neighbours to speak and do the truth in love to the restraint of evil and the reconciling of men to thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Throughout her 70 years on the throne, this prayer for grace, truth, and love in her dealings with people has been put to the test many times.

In her 2011 Christmas broadcast she said:

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families; it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.

A few months later in an extraordinary gesture, she put grace and forgiveness into practice when she visited Northern Ireland and shook hands with Martin McGuinness, who had been a commander of the provisional Irish Republican Army until 1975, just 4 years before the Queen's second cousin Lord Louis Mountbatten was blown up by an IRA bomb.

At Christmas 2014, she explained what inspired her to forgive:

For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an 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 respect and value all people of whatever faith or none.

In the Lord's Prayer we regularly pray, *'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.'* True confession can be uncomfortable as we examine ourselves in the light of Christ. In a moment we will have opportunity to reflect on personal or global wrongdoing and offer them up to God for healing and reconciliation. The parable of the Lost Son doesn't tell us whether the brothers are eventually reconciled but there are two key phrases which stand out to me as important indicators of the Father's love. *'While he was still a long way off'*, and *'Everything I have is yours'*. The compassionate Father provides the pattern and example that the Queen and countless many others find the strength and resilience to forgive in tough situations. For me one of the most moving stories of forgiveness came from Jill Saward, the Ealing Vicarage Rape victim. In her book, *Rape: My Story*, she wrote: *"I believe forgiveness gives you freedom. "Freedom to move on without being held back by the past."*

If you're struggling to forgive someone right now, I have good news for you: Forgiveness is not a feeling, so we don't have to feel like forgiving to forgive. It's a choice we make because we want to follow Jesus, and it opens the door for our soul to heal.

Now, I want to be sure you understand what I mean—and don't mean—about forgiving people. To forgive does not mean that we allow others to continue to treat us badly, that we never confront their bad behaviour, or that we let them get away with walking all over us. What forgiveness does mean is that we choose not to stay angry with people or get even because of what they've done, but to let God take care of vindicating us. It also means that we'll pray God's best for them, and even have some compassion for them, because we know they're only hurting themselves by mistreating others.

I often wonder about what happened next in today's parable I can only hope that the compassionate father acts as the bridge to healing between his sons and that his willingness to forgive gave others an example to follow.

I am inspired by people like Jill Saward and our Queen who speak unashamedly about their faith as their reason for capacity to forgive. If they can do this how much more can we let the little things go whether we holiday at home or away? This summer let us practice forgiveness in a humble and real way leaving space for the Holy Spirit to work within and around us.

RAD

Faithfulness and Witness

(Matthew 5:13-16)

Queen Elizabeth II has a strong Christian faith that has been evident throughout her life in her words and actions. As well as her formal role as 'Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England', which came with monarchy, her personal faith was evident even before she was crowned and has been the hallmark of her reign.

In 2008 the Queen said: 'I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish, and sacrificial life ... He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than in being served.'

In several of her speeches Her Majesty refers to the story of the Good Samaritan. The story Jesus told of a Samaritan, the traditional enemy of the Jews who stops and helps a traveller who has been attacked, paying for his lodging and treating his wounds. It points to Christianity that isn't always found where you expect it, in the respectable, the pious, those with status, but found in the outsider. It points to Christian actions which are highly practical, sacrificial and compassionate.

In today's reading we are called to be salt and light. Light that we find from God, through Jesus and in the power of the Spirit and can reflect to the world.

How can we do this? I would suggest by:

- Being counter-cultural. We live in a dark world, full of lies, hate and confusion. ...we can show a different way of living and responding.

- Putting yourself out there. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16a) We need to engage with those in difficult and dark situations.

Always pointing back to the light source, our motivation is that we are responding to God's sacrificial love for us in Jesus. We dare to pray that others will be drawn to Jesus by our words, our compassionate presence, our actions.

What are the qualities of light? What lights can you think of?

..... Congregation input

Warning: Two of Jesus' warnings: trusting in materialism 32 "Little flock, do not be afraid. Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell what you own. Give to those who are poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out. Store up riches in heaven that will never be used up. There, no thief can come near it. There, no moth can destroy it. 34 Your heart will be where your riches are.

Putting off giving God priority in our lives, a great temptation. I will be a better Christian when (examples).

"Be dressed and ready to serve. Keep your lamps burning. 36 Be like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding dinner.

Illuminating: Jesus offers light in our darkness making things clearer and helping us to see things in perspective.' Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice!" This statement permeates through all circumstances This is the hope of Christianity that gives us an opportunity to celebrate life through a different lens. This is deep joy that we are loved, can rely on God to be with us whatever our circumstances. This is not a protection against suffering and tragedy it is a deep sense of God's peace in all times. The Holy Spirit's dwelling within us literally changes us from the inside out. "you are a new creation."

Guiding: We are guided by how Jesus lived, what he taught how he was obedient to God, how he challenged anything that excluded people in society and how he treated those he encountered. We find guidance in the Bible narrative, Christian tradition, prayer, worshipping with a Christian community and reflecting deeply on the needs of others and our response.

Protecting: For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depths, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8: 38-39

Bringing hope: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light'.

Today we are looking at new starts of faith, this afternoon we have 2 sets of siblings, cousins being baptised. They will be given a candle, as a symbol that Jesus is the light of the world and that they are called to reflect that light.

The words said are 'God is able to light the darkest places with love. You have received the light of Christ, walk in this light all the days of your life. Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father'

In a moment we will celebrate God's gift of a child Sebastian, son of Dominic and Mary, who were married here in lockdown.

SC

Tolerance

(John 8:1-11)

This summer we are looking at values of the Queen and today we're reflecting on Tolerance.

When I hear the word tolerance, I often hear it in a negative tone.

Tolerance can conjure images of grinning-and-bearing-it, or a begrudging attitude: "oh, you know, I tolerate them"

But when we look at what it actually takes to be tolerant, the heart level of this quality - we see what a challenge it *really* is to be tolerant.

The Queen advocates tolerance as: *“the acceptance, engagement and mutual respect of those with different creeds, colours and backgrounds.”*

So the opposite of tolerance is: not accepting, not engaging and not respecting others. Which can also be describes as being: intolerant or narrow-minded.

Which reminds me of being like a box.



The opposite of tolerance is hemming ourselves in.

Putting our own views first, thinking our way of doing things is the right and proper way.

We may peer over the sides sometimes, see what else is out there, but prefer the comfort of our own camp.

But doing this - we close ourselves of from difference. Enforcing our secure, familiar walls around us. But.. in our boxes we harbour judgmental, proud or boastful attitudes. We can be very defensive inside our fortified walls. And actually not very loving at all.

In a nation made up of different cultural and social backgrounds, the Queen’s example of tolerance is a valuable characteristic of her leadership, advocating that we should all respect one and other equally, regardless of our backgrounds and ethnicities.

Therefore, we are not to be a bunch of boxes guarding ourselves from each other.

We see these qualities of tolerance come up time and time again in the Bible.

A couple of examples:

Jesus commands us to respect one and other - that we are to treat one and other as we want to be treated.

And Paul reminds us that we are to love each other, not *despite* our differences but *for* our differences

- as we are many body parts making up a whole being.

As the Queen stated in her 2004 Christmas address - diversity is "a strength, not a threat".

It is fundamental to Christian living that we love and accept the other for who they are and no matter what they have done.

In our Bible reading today - we see how others demanded a woman to be treated harshly, to the point of death, for sinning, for fallen below perfection and the standards of the law.

Jesus rightly asks the accusers "who is better than this woman? Who of you here has never sinned?" And one by one, they realised - they are not *better* than her.

Reminding us we are all prone to falling, messing up and hurting others - on a daily basis.

Jesus demonstrates non-judgment, acceptance, forgiveness by seeing her for who she truly is. He looks on her with love.

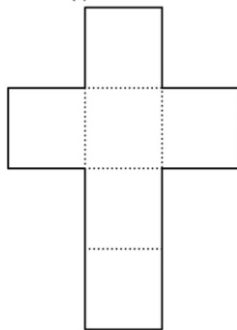
Now - The Pharisees and Sadducees weren't capable of this level of love - as they were so bounded in by their prejudices and *holier-than-thou* perspective.

And we aren't supposed to live like those bound by the religious law - thinking my way is the only way, that my way is the best way. Ultimately festering an attitude of being better than others.

As Jesus challenged *them* - what about *us*?

Who *here* is without sin? None of us are faultless or have it all right.

So what does it take to be lovingly tolerant?



It takes.. forgiveness, trust, openness, listening, sharing, accepting.

(As we unfold the shape of a box, we have a two dimensional cross)

When we live as a community, in church and beyond - we need to choose to focus on what unites us over what divides us.

Then we can realise how much we, in fact, have in common - seeing each other as precious children of God,

Then we come together and live in relationship and community - celebrating our differences not in rivalling camps.

We each have a different story to tell of God's love.

We each see the world from a different perspective.

May we live in relationship with one and other, live in unity as a loving community, lovingly tolerant of our differences.

Let us take a moment to reflect.

Do you feel like a box today?

Holding up your boundaries or walls - the things that make you feel safe, but may also be causing conflict and division between you and others.

In what ways can we let our walls down? How can we listen more openly? Can we be vulnerable, trusting that we will also be heard and accepted? How can we focus on what unites us rather than what divides us?

Lord, we thank you that our Queen exemplifies and encourages an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect in our nation. We pray that as a country we will be more accepting and loving of others and be brave enough to embrace difference. Lord, we pray for ourselves, as the Body of Christ, may we remember that you have created us equal yet wonderfully different. Help each of us to accept one and other's diversity, be forgiving of each other when we fall down, and build one and other up in the love of Christ.

*That we may be united and be the light of your love and grace in this world,
for the Glory of Jesus' name.*

Amen

EHH

Curiosity

Today, as we continue to look at virtues embodied in Her Majesty the Queen, we come to curiosity. This abstract noun may surprise you as applied to the crown, or maybe even preached in a sermon, but I think it is a very important idea to look at in our Christian journey, as I will try to elucidate.

For some, we might be reminded of the old saying "Curiosity killed the cat" but I would suggest that the cat was certainly showing recklessness, what the German language calls mad boldness, or the English foolhardiness.

No, curiosity comes like so much of our vocabulary from Latin via French – 1066 and all that. The root is cure, but the meaning is care. Hopefully we will see both of these words as positive and life-enhancing. This added a dimension to the old English word for curiosity which actually meant "further knowledge".

In the linguistic fighting of the early Middle Ages, the French word triumphed.

What has this to do with the Queen, you may well ask?

When Epsom College was celebrating a big anniversary, the Queen, our Patron,

visited and after lunch went off to have coffee with the prefects. I spoke to some of them and they told me how impressed they were by her openness and friendliness and her curiosity about them as individuals. Curiosity was part of her way of understanding people and such as their experience is by no means an isolated incident.

When I looked up curiosity and the Bible, I was horrified to find that many websites saw this concept as somehow alien to the Christian revelation. People should be content with the knowledge that they have been given and should avoid the snares of Satan as curiosity really might kill the cat. But then I found a reference in Proverbs:

It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of men is to search things out, like the heavens for height, like the earth for depth.,

Curiosity can lead you astray, but in the well rounded individual it is tempered by a moral compass and common sense. We do not need to experiment with drugs or crime to know that they set you on the path to destruction. We are all different and different things will make us curious: science, nature, human psychology, mathematics, the arts, with me language, but without them there would be no progress and, I believe, no wisdom.

Jesus was clearly curious. As a child he hung around the temple, talking to learned people. We are told by Luke in Chapter 2:

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, [a] and in divine and human favour.

In John's Gospel, Greeks are curious and seek out Jesus; in the Acts of the Apostles, St Paul addresses those Greeks who have amongst their pantheon of gods an altar to the Unknown God – just in case!

Curiosity has led to many of the greatest discoveries in science, been the inspiration for the arts and is what can keep us alive and ticking well into later life.

Young people are naturally curious and may experiment incautiously and need

guidance. Thinking through ideas in one's working life can lead to innovation and enormous satisfaction. Think of the work that went into the provision of vaccinations against Covid. In later life, habits of curiosity can keep you alert. Think of many of us who are intrigued by Sudoku or Wordle.

When the Queen understood the enormity of the task awaiting her upon the death of her father Albert, George VI, she had to go through a hard process of re-education. She had understood the implications of the abdication of Edward the VIII but curiosity and the search for wisdom led her to understand things better. She had had little formal education in the way that her sons and grandchildren were to have. She had to quickly grasp how people work, the psychology not just of politicians with their regular audiences, but with ordinary people as she worked tirelessly on so many commitment. Her husband, Prince Philip, also had to buckle down and one of the results was the DoE scheme which has seen so many young people develop interests beyond what they had had before.

Two quotes appealed to me: Albert Einstein said: "Never lose a holy curiosity." And in a recent article for a Christian magazine, the writer Nicola Unice reflects on an immediate thought that passed through her mind upon seeing a down and out sleeping rough in the city:

How much do I shape how I see you with my white suburban-woman Attitude?" and she goes on:

I was curious. And that is a gift. Curiosity is born of observation, of looking outside of ourselves with a desire to know the world. It is other rather than self-centred. It desires to ask and seek. A curious mind is open to new discoveries. A curious mind is open to God's dynamic and creative work in this world.

Alongside the many virtues that our Queen has shown over the years must stand curiosity – asking the right questions and listening to the answers. As Christians, we are surely called to look beyond ourselves to the wonders of creation and to the infinite variety of human experience, and to respond to the

need around us which we can only see if we are curious and alert.

Finally, Marina McCoy, an American professor of philosophy offers practical Christian advice. She writes:

I am making an effort to do more listening and less talking. Too often, I can make assumptions about other's needs or motivations. When I remind myself to be curious about what another person might be wanting, thinking, or doing, I am better situated to be responsive rather than reactive.

Asking genuine questions that arise from curiosity rather than presumption helps us to be more deeply aware of God's presence in those around us.

Staying curious about others allows us to reverence the mystery of another person. Staying curious gives us room to be surprised by God.

Curiosity: the root is cure, but the meaning is care.

BC

Humility

(John 13:3-17)

Jesus washing the disciples feet is often viewed as the ultimate act of humility – why would he as King of the universe do such a thing? Today we come to the end of our summer series, where in this Platinum Jubilee year we have been exploring some of the values of the Queen. As head of the Church of England and a regular worshipper she frequently extols the value of prayer and the joy of corporate worship. Although she never explicitly encourages anyone to go to church, she does go out of her way to affirm followers of Christ. In her annual Christmas broadcast she frequently explores the theme of service and humility. I particularly like this quote,

“For all the inhumanity around us, let us be grateful for those who have received him and who go about quietly doing their work and his will without thought of reward or recognition. They know that there is an eternal truth of much greater significance than our own triumphs or tragedies, and it is embodied by the child in the manger.”

In her commendation of Songs of Praise on its 60th anniversary in 2011, we can see that she appreciates the difference between church attendance and discipleship.

“This programme has shown Christianity as a living faith not only through hymns and worship songs, but also through featuring the many people who have put their faith at the centre of their lives.”

Faith in Christ is not a leisure time bolt on but something ‘living’ that should shape our whole lives. We are not just saved by faith we live by it. The Queen herself makes her own declaration of deep personal gratitude for Christ and the transformative difference he makes in her life. It is clear that her confidence lies in him, and the value of his ways. See, for example, how gently, humbly, and robustly she testifies to that,

“It is not always easy to accept his teaching, but I have no doubt that the New Year will be better if we do but try.”

We all need saving from ourselves and the Queen is no exception. Indeed, there is no sense of moral superiority or judgmentalism in her summons to the good or her naming of the human need for forgiveness. Rather she is clear about her own limitations and need for help.

“I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings and to put my trust in God.”

As parents and godparents this is the life of faith that you are wanting for Rafe and for which we as a church community are delighted to welcome him into. You are making the promises on his behalf today and we must pray that his heart will tell him he wants to follow Jesus for himself at a later point. He will need you to be the example of the path to follow. A Christian is simply a follower or disciple of Jesus, someone who wants to learn from Jesus and his teaching how to live their life. This takes humility to acknowledge that we don’t always get it right and that our way might not be the best or only way.

The symbol of the cross is literally ‘I’ /self or ego crossed out. Instead of giving into our own human and selfish desires we will try with the help of God’s Holy Spirit and the encouragement of fellow travellers in the Christian community to put Jesus first.

The Queen said each day is a new beginning and baptism is a sign of that new life in Christ. Similar to having a wash or shower in the morning we are cleansing ourselves of old/human ways and starting afresh in the waters of the font.

Each baptised person also receives a lit candle to remind them to continue to walk in the light of Christ which can show us the ways of righteousness and truth. These three symbols central to a baptism service are powerful reminders of the servant heart that led Jesus to wash his disciples feet.

He was showing them that no individual is above another. We are to be kind and compassionate, treating others as we want to be treated. Denying self, making a new start and following Jesus' example.

You may have heard the saying that the difference between confidence and arrogance is humility. You have likely also heard people use phrases like, "humble brag," or "I don't mean to toot my own horn /blow my own trumpet" Truthfully, they do mean to toot, and a brag is not humble. We know this because the person proceeds to share an accomplishment, something that makes them feel special. They simply do so with some reservation, not asking you to get on your knees and worship them, but wanting you to express some admiration nonetheless. People are correct when they say there's a difference between confidence and arrogance. That dividing line is indeed humility. Confidence says, "I have skills and I recognize them." Arrogance says, "I have skills and others must recognize them."

Why does humility differentiate confidence and arrogance? The answer - humility changes how we view ourselves. When we are humble, our goal is not to exalt ourselves, especially over other people.

Are we supposed to think less of ourselves or think of ourselves less? Don't we mostly talk about ourselves on social media? Are we expected to be humble at all times? Should our CV's be humble or our LinkedIn profiles?

Jesus did not preach inferiority, not in the sense of self-worth. Jesus did not teach people how to be abused by others. Rather, He taught us how to be lowly in nature so that we could forgive those who persecute us. He taught us how to rebuke and move on from offenses (*Be on your guard! If another disciple^[a] sins, you must rebuke*

the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. Luke 17:3). Offering forgiveness to someone is not a sign of inferiority. God forgives us, and He isn't inferior. And teaching us to rebuke means we shouldn't accept all kinds of treatment. Jesus lived a life of humility, maintaining a low rank in society. He lived as a servant, a carpenter by trade. In His ministry, he urged followers to live as He did. The essential message was following God. This is a reminder that though we may desire one thing, God could have other plans. The humble person will submit to God's plan, just like Jesus did.

Humility is important in the Christian life because without it we cannot expect salvation from the Lord. Without humility, we won't lead lives that put other people before our own wants and needs. The Bible gives many helpful examples of humility, through sayings and through character examples. By using these templates, we too can model our lives after what God wants.

Being a Christian does not mean our own wants and needs are unimportant but being Christian does mean we have an obligation to follow God. We live not to serve ourselves but to serve Him and serve other people according to His wishes.

Humility keeps Christians from walking their own path, from living life how they see fit instead of God. Humility helps Christians ensure that they are prioritizing other people, not just themselves. If we lived according to our own desires, what need would a Christian have for others? By seeking humility, we acknowledge who God is and His authority over our lives.

If God blesses the humble, then we want to reap that blessing for Rafe and ourselves. Maybe as Melissa, David and the godparents make these promise for Rafe we could all decide to make those promises afresh internally too. To choose God and others over self. I believe the change will be worthwhile.

RAD

-Ends-