

Church of St John the Evangelist, Elora
Evensong to Commemorate Queen Elizabeth II
October 30, 2022
Canon Paul Walker

Her Majesty the Queen was an unparalleled icon of fidelity and stability in our world. As she lived into an office and embodied a role for 70 years, clearly Queen Elizabeth II will be remembered as a remarkable woman.

On the death of her father in 1952, she pledged her life to this unique role of monarch and served in it as a personal calling, a divine vocation that became for her the foundation and defining structure for all that she did.

I grew up in a household that on Christmas Day would ensure that we watched or heard the broadcast of the Queen's annual Christmas message. There would be a lot of "shushing" going on when the credits opened with the Royal Anthem being sung by a children's choir or played by a military or civic band. Silently gathered around the television to watch the broadcast we listened with the attention that any loyal subjects would give to their monarch. In



her message the Queen would provide a summary of the year's events, a recognition of the lives of people in service to others, and an affirmation of the inspiration she derived from the Christian faith. When it was all over there would be some evaluative comments that, "well yes, she did a very good job," or, "she's looking a little older," or "did you see her broach? Or the photos on the desk?" Somehow this annual Christmas custom marked the passage of time.

Tomorrow is all hallow's eve - the eve of All Saints day. It is when we remember that we live in the midst of an invisible but ever present company called the "communion of saints" - all those whose lives of exemplary service and devotion inspire us to live as better people. While they are often people who died for their commitments and devotion, the Queen obviously does not fulfill that criteria. But as she gave herself unswervingly to this office, she fulfilled what the best of the role of a Monarch can provide. The Queen represented three very important things: stability, unity, and service. The Queen provided stability amidst the ever changing world and competing agendas of

different partisan politics. She brought people together from different backgrounds, cultures and affinities to uphold their lives of service in an age of increased polarization and division. The Queen became an example of service for the sake of the larger good in an age of individualism, celebrity status and consumerism. She did all of this with grace, joy, humour, and a level of self-sacrifice that one cannot help but be inspired by her dedication.

In the St. John's Poppy installation this year you will notice interspersed amidst the thousands of poppies cascading out of the church tower, some black poppies, with red centres and gold trim. They are a memorial to the life of the Queen. As we commemorate the Queen's life, it is important to acknowledge that at the heart of her service, was a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ, and devotion to God.

In the vision of the new heaven and earth described by John there are some significant things absent. There is no sea and no temple, no sun, no moon and no night. There is no falsehood, no violence, no security detail, or anything that is abhorrent. At the heart of it is a

crystal river, lined with the tree of life, flowing from the throne of God, and the lamb of God becomes the light for all nations. The gates of this holy city are never shut, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. It seems to me that *we* are the glory of the Queen. As her subjects, we become her legacy. May we live into that glory by dedicating ourselves to a life of service, providing stability for others, and always drawing people together in unity.

