

Letter from the Vicar

Easter Saturday, 10 April 2021

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It was with deep sadness that we learned of the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, yesterday. Although not always and universally liked, over the years he came to occupy a unique place within the life of our Country and within the hearts of her people. His devoted support of Her Majesty has been unstinting; his work with and for charities, young people, and the military has been inspirational and relentless; and his faith has been deep and sincere. During my years in Westminster I was fortunate to meet The Duke of Edinburgh on numerous occasions and will recall those encounters with gratitude over the coming days as we prepare for his funeral. Should you wish to like a candle in memory, prayer, or thanksgiving for Prince Philip a portrait has been placed next to the votive stand in St John's. Sadly, we are not able to offer a Book of Condolence due to Covid restrictions but, if you are so minded, we are encouraged to add these to the e-book compiled by Buckingham Palace.

The last significant Royal funeral was nearly 20 years ago upon the death of Her Majesty The Queen Mother – also at Easter. As Christians, there is something quite fitting about a funeral held during Eastertide for it is a season which constantly reminds us of the victory of Christ over sin and death and his promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Last Sunday, the joy of Christ's resurrection was tangible for many as we sang God's glory and celebrated the Paschal mystery once more. It was particularly pleasing to be able to sing once more – albeit outside – and I suspect this helped fill us with Easter joy. Approximately 100 people came to the Parish Easter Eucharist in person – with many others joining either virtually or coming to one of our other services at St Francis' or St Stephen's. Our decorated and specially cleaned churches also added to the splendour and I should like to add my thanks to everyone who helped in these tasks – your efforts didn't go un-noticed, thank you.

This Monday, with restrictions easing a little more, we take one step further towards our common life returning to 'normal'. It has been encouraging to see the case rate drop below 30 cases per 100,000 in this area in recent days but with greater testing in operation I regret I don't see this getting much lower in the coming weeks. That being said, the vaccination roll-out is something of a triumph and I eagerly await the day when everyone has had the opportunity to be vaccinated. As clubs and organisations begin to meet again in person and we are able to meet-up with people more freely I encourage you to remain vigilant and remember the slogan: Hands: Face: Space: and fresh air.

As always I leave you with my prayers and best wishes, and the proclamation of our Easter faith, for:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ is Risen.
He is Risen indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia!"

In Christ,



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Vicar

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