

**A Sermon preached by the Bishop of Coventry,
Christopher Cocksworth
in Coventry Cathedral during a special Service on 9th April 2021
to mark the death of
His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh**

Reading: John 14.1-6

Troubled hearts in shock and loss

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me’, said Jesus.

Of course, on this day, our hearts cannot help but be troubled. Throughout the lives of many of us – most of us – Prince Philip has been the loving husband and steadfast companion of Her Majesty The Queen. He has been both a source of stability for all that is good in the present and the past and a hopeful, curious, confident navigator of the future, welcoming the possibilities of the modern world while reminding us of our responsibilities.

Although we knew Prince Philip’s years had been long and that he was not well, the shock of the news of his death remains. We will have our own memories of his life of devoted public service, his presence with The Queen on countless occasions and that mischievous twinkle in his eye. I had the honour of meeting Prince Philip myself, and I was touched by his kindness to me personally.

Our hearts go out to The Queen whose own heart, with her deep sense of loss, will also be troubled this day, and we are conscious of the greatness of that loss after 73 years of marriage. Earlier this afternoon I wrote to Her Majesty to send the condolences of the Diocese of Coventry and to assure Her of the prayers of all our parish churches, church schools, chaplaincies and our cathedral. We join with people of every faith and none in mourning the passing of Prince Philip.

Troubled hearts overcome by faith

We know that, though grieving, The Queen, will this day be holding on to Jesus' words, 'Believe in God, believe also in me'. Words that Jesus spoke shortly before his own death to those who loved him. He knew that grief was coming for them and that it would disturb their hearts. He was saying to them, though, "Do not let your hearts be so troubled that they are overcome by fear and lose their hope. Let your troubled hearts be overcome by faith – faith in me and in the goodness of God that I have shown to you – and let your hearts be filled with hope".

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me', said Jesus. 'In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told that I go to prepare a place for you'.

He was saying to his disciples, when you face this moment of deep bereavement, and I leave you, know that I am going ahead, to prepare a place in my Father's house for you, so that, when the time comes, 'where I am, there you may also be'.

The Shepherd who lays down his life and takes it up again

One of the favourite hymns of Her Majesty, I am told, is The Lord's My Shepherd. We heard it sung to us today. It promises that 'even when we walk through death's dark vale', God is with us. His 'goodness and mercy follow us all our life'.

Prince Philip has died during the Easter Season, the time of the year when we remember that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, fulfilled his promise to lay down his life for his sheep. Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, died in the faith of Jesus Christ who went before him – before each of us – to prepare the way through the darkness of death into the light of God's presence, the Father's house with many rooms – room for each of us.

'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me', said Jesus.