

Haddo House Chapel
Celebration of the Queen's 90th Birthday
Psalms 139:1-18
Luke 12:22-31

The second reading we heard a few moments ago comes from Luke's travel narrative of Jesus.

The subject of Luke's section here is worry about earthly matters. We heard the first of a sequence of counsels, or pieces of advice, that range their way through the rest of his chapter.

In general these sayings exhort Jesus' disciples towards a correct and fundamental approach to everyday, earthly life – details of food and clothing and material possessions more generally.

Thus it says, "Cast off worry about food and clothing, realise that life itself has greater concerns than these needs of material existence."

Jesus draws images from what can be seen in the Palestinian countryside and offers vivid detail to press his point.

Be as free from worry as the ravens, the lilies, even the grass in the field, he advises. They all thrive without worry, because God himself cares for them.

So from ourselves, let us apply a parallel. "Do not worry about whether or not your country becomes independent. Nor should you worry about whether or not you leave the European Union."

And Jesus continues, 'Your Father is well aware of all this; seek rather to be secure in His kingdom and whatever else happens will be given to you in addition.'

Priority of values is proposed. And were we to have continued reading beyond where we did, we hear that 'no amount of worry can add an extra moment to one's life.'

Direction in life should come from a preoccupation with God and his reign. Concern for earthly details may prove to be only an obstacle to the single minded pursuit of and service to the kingdom of God.

It is in this regard that we do indeed give thanks for the quite remarkable reign of our Sovereign, Queen Elizabeth.

One always has the sense that whilst she uniquely rises above the cut and thrust of daily politics, nonetheless her overall concern for her realm, and for the hedgerows of our fields, the labour of the factories, the chatter of the café and the commerce of the call-centre is all framed within the love she clearly has for God in the context of her Christian faith.

Our second reading also betrays self-conscious awareness of the early Christian community in its struggle for recognition, unity and cohesion.

Reassurance is being given through its words to that community.

The image is offered of a peace to pass all understanding and which, in turn, should transcend all fear, despite the small size of the group.

In addition one can recall the idyllic summaries of Acts 2:42ff or the divisive episode of Ananias and Sapphira of Acts 5:1ff, both written at the same time as this passage from Luke.

Jesus' words could presage the scattering of the group after his death; their reward being promised as a share in the kingdom itself.

Whilst we cannot be exactly certain whether or not these words exactly quote Jesus they are used by Luke here to encourage the people around him to steadfastness in troubled times that if not around them at that precise moment, might nonetheless soon come along.

For ourselves, we are blessed in this time of much calm in our country. Yet others are not so fortunate in other countries and it behoves us in this land to share some of the benefits we have with others who have need.

And were things to go wrong in our noble land, and one should never assume that automatically things are permanently set for peace in our time, one has the sense that the equation that balances our political democracy with constitutional monarchy has within it the capacity to offer the best available guarantee for optimum welfare opportunity for all.

Meantime, and now I speculate, I have not the slightest doubt that were things to go awry, and that were the political democracy that governs us to seek to achieve a one-sided rise above its station that the constitutional monarchy we have would align itself with the people.

The witness of our Queen since her accession to the throne has proven to be one of secure adaptability to change in even the most perplexing and challenging of circumstances.

Where internal family matters affecting the Royal family and its household have dominated tabloid front pages an outwardly serene presence has seen its way through many an *annus horribilis*.

I have not the slightest doubt that there has been much worry when things in the family have been going wrong. And I have not the slightest doubt that worry for our country continues.

We are all human after all.

But somehow, life before God, life lived under God, and the practice of faith through the strength of God has seen, and continues to see, our Queen face it all square on, placing all in the hands of God, and thus be enabled to address it all in whatever way was needed for it to be addressed.

Whilst there is much for us personally to be thankful for, and much that gives us peace and calm, nonetheless violence from within or from without is never far away.

Pray then that our Queen will continue for a very long time to come to place this kingdom within the frame of God's kingdom and that her heirs and successors will similarly do likewise.

For it is only in the hands of God that the cares of today can be set in a peace that passes all understanding.

This is a peace that our Sovereign has graciously sought through God to live for us and for her realm; not through anything that originated with her but rather by living God's will on our behalf and shaping the kingdom which she inherited according to the Kingdom that God seeks to establish.

May it long be so. Amen.

†Robert Gillies
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