



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

The Archbishop reflects in today's York Press on how we are all called to serve others in the lives that we live

One of the truly lovely things about being Archbishop of York is that I am, for a short period of time, custodian of Bishopthorpe Palace. This is a place Her Majesty the Queen visited as a young Princess and where she stayed during the Royal Ascot meeting in 2005. And in the garden today, there is an avenue of trees planted to mark this Platinum Jubilee year.

A slightly curious thing about living in such a place, is that as I walk the rooms and corridors, I am followed by the gaze of my predecessors staring out of their portraits that adorn the walls. I'm fortunate to stand on their shoulders. One of the most captivating portraits I think is of Archbishop William Temple who was Archbishop of York between 1929 and 1942. During that period, whilst not only trying to do all of the things that Archbishops are supposed to do, he found time to write extensively not least the 1942 work entitled "Christianity and Social Order".

In that period, at the start of the second world war and through the darkest days of the blitz, with the sort of mind-set that only true visionaries have, Temple was asking the big question "when this is all over, what sort of nation do we want to be?" Although he did not live to see it, much of his thought is foundational to so many things we take for granted today, not least the welfare state, the NHS, and our universal education system.

At the core of what Temple was striving for, as with so many other social reformers in this great City of York, was to improve the lives of people and see those lives transformed. This reminds me of how far, as a country, we have come from those days – yes there is still much to do and Temple's question is one for us now, but it is worth reflecting that throughout all of this change we have lived with one Monarch, whose Jubilee we mark this weekend.

As we gathered in the grounds of the Palace last week with pupils, staff and governors from the Archbishop of York Junior school, we reflected on what celebrating this Jubilee means and of how our Queen has been a wonderful beacon of hope, integrity, stability, and unity for our country and beyond. There are few that remember a monarch before her. This stability has been a reassuring and encouraging presence in the midst of so much change, and of course the Monarchy itself has changed. Continuity and change have been hallmarks of this Elizabethan age.

The profound commitment Her Majesty the Queen made in 1947 at just age 21 when she said, "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service", has been faithfully realised. And at the heart of that commitment has been the Queen's own deep faith, that in continuity and change she has relied on God and on a model of service which we see in Jesus Christ. So as we mark the Platinum Jubilee, it is my prayer that we remember that all of us are called by God to serve others in our homes, schools, communities and we are also invited to build our foundations on Jesus Christ. For when we serve others, we have the best opportunity of achieving the fairer and more just society which I hope we all wish to see.



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