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In today's *Sunday Express*, Archbishop Stephen reflects on the role of Her Late Majesty The Queen as grandmother to the nation

Up and down the country, we feel that a beloved grandmother has died. But it's not just in the UK. In Canada, someone wrote, "Queen Elizabeth's death feels like we've all lost a grandmother".

Our late Queen, when paying tribute to Princess Diana after her death in 1997, spoke of herself not only as our Queen but also as a grandmother. So we can identify with Prince Harry, who shared his intimate feelings about the grief he was feeling. It was as though he was writing her a last letter from the heart:

"Granny, while this final parting brings us great sadness, I am forever grateful for all of our first meetings—from my earliest childhood memories with you, to meeting you for the first time as my Commander-in-Chief, to the first moment you met my darling wife and hugged your beloved great-grandchildren."

Tomorrow's funeral, with its solemn and dignified pageantry, as befits the Monarch of 15 nations, will be attended by hundreds of heads of state, politicians and dignitaries, led by King Charles and the Royal Family. The Queen's coffin will be carried to Westminster Abbey on a gun carriage, drawn by 142 sailors of the Royal Navy. It's hard to imagine anything more majestic and, at the same time, more poignant. The millions who line the route will relay this unique event to their children and grandchildren, telling not only of the grandeur of the occasion, but also of the uniquely personal relationship they felt they had with her. I had the opportunity to meet some of the thousands who waited in line to pay homage at Her Majesty's coffin. It was clear to me that the Queen had touched their hearts, as happens with those we love in our family. She had in so many ways become the grandmother who took the whole nation under her wings.

This makes me think about the unique relationship we have with our own mums and grandmothers. Surprisingly, they actually help to echo the relationship which exists between God and the world. Let me explain. When a child wakes up crying in the middle of the night, scared because it has had a bad dream, mum takes the frightened child in her arms and says, "There, there, everything's alright". When she does that, she is repeating the reassurance her own mother gave to her, long before. When you think about it, what they are also communicating is a statement of faith about the very nature of our existence. "There, there, it's alright". Well is it? It suggests that, despite our fears, real or imagined, there is something solid and trustworthy undergirding our very existence. That's exactly what a believer in God will say. To quote the Bible, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms". In the midst of all the confusions, uncertainties and horrors of life, we find security in those we love and in the love of God who is the source of love and the author of peace.

Time and time again Queen Elizabeth has been described as a rock or anchor. Prime Minister Liz Truss said, "Queen Elizabeth II was the rock on which modern Britain was built. Our country has grown and flourished under her reign." One of Gibraltar's pensioners wrote, "she was very

respected here in Gibraltar and we'll be mourning her death. We are the British Rock of Gibraltar, but she was our rock and that's what kept us determined."

The Queen attributed all that to God-at-work in her life. She made no secret that the source of her personal inspiration and the foundation of her faith was Jesus Christ himself. This is best explained in some words Jesus used about himself:

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock."

It's important to read on, for Jesus then uttered this warning,

"And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

Everyone has to choose for themselves what they will build their life on. From the time she was a 21 year old Princess, our Queen deliberately chose to model her life on faith in Jesus Christ and his teachings. We think of her, the nation's grandmother, as our rock. It's now an open secret that her rock was no less than Christ himself. Tomorrow, we will commend her into the everlasting arms of God, her Maker and ours. I shall be thinking of Christ's words to his disciples, as he prepared them for his own death, "I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also."

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