

Reflection Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## John 20:19-31

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." <sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

My reflection this weekend starts with the gospel passage for this Sunday and with the news from Friday of the death of HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh.

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book."

The Television Screen on Friday afternoon and evening were full of reports of the death of the Duke and reflections upon his life. Some of that life was lived in public view much more was lived with a certain amount of privacy. In the coming days more news will be shared by people who encountered him during his life, but many of course are not around to share their memories for they have gone on before. Some will no doubt seek to write a biography, or extend one already written.

I have not got an accurate record of the number of funeral services I have conducted during the last 30 years or so but it must be approaching a 1,000 or so.

On almost every occasion I have met with family, and or friends, to hear something of the persons life in advance of the service. So many lives I have had the privilege of reflecting on with a person's family and friends. On most occasions there has been some laughter shared in the conversation alongside the tears for tears and laughter are so closely linked. In those conversations I hear part of a story.

There is no full record of a person's life, each life is unique, and each life intertwines with other unique life-stories. I believe at the end of each life there should be something of the story told, and listened to. On many an occasion have I heard people say afterwards, "I didn't know that....."

In the Gospels we have a record of some parts of the life of Jesus. The Gospels are not biographical, they are not an historical record, and they do not seek to tell every part of the life of Jesus. They are a record of moments in the life of Jesus, reflected upon and seen as being of significance and importance that people such as you and I, "may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah".

As many will listen to the story of the life of Prince Philip we will be listening to part of the story, selected instances, to show a particular part of the man. Some will seek to show the negative images where he opened his mouth and words were heard coming forth that may not have been appropriate or politically correct; but then who has not done so themselves. Some will portray the supportive Consort, that he most definitely was; some the family man; some the thinking man, the man of faith; the person of environmental concern ahead of many others.

Each person is complex, 3 dimensional (at least), and we only know part of a story. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, knows the whole story. He knows your story and mine and he loves us because of it, or despite it.

Next Saturday there will be a family in grief and mourning for a much-loved member of their family; may we listen to the part of his story that is told with respect for each of those who grieve.