

Today our great sovereign lady has been laid to rest, reunited with her beloved Philip, her parents King George and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, amongst the tombs of her ancestors at Windsor Castle.

Over the past days, more than a million mourners gathered in a solemn pilgrimage of gratitude and remembrance for a woman who was the bedrock of our common lives together. And countless others around the world have found their own ways to mourn not just her demise, but the end of the Elizabethan Era.

Today, for the first time in recorded history, a majority of the world's heads of state and government gathered in one place to honour and pray for one woman. That is astonishing, as has been this entire period of mourning. In a loud, confusing and sometimes violent world, where anger and incivility too often have reigned, much of the world has stopped in quiet, peace, and gratitude, to honour a kindly grandmother, whose reign was one of goodness and selfless service.

In this sense, Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second was, to use the words of St. John-Paul the Second, a sign of contradiction. By the dutiful and dignified way that she led a very public life, by the virtues that she exemplified, by the Christian faith that anchored her, she was a sign of contradiction against so much of the darkness that has characterized the modern age. An age which her life transcended.

As I said in my tribute in the Assembly last week, Her Majesty's first prime minister was born in 1870 and her last prime minister was born in 1971. She bridged a century that characterized exponentially more change than any other in human history. She did so with wisdom and dignity.

How did a 24-year-old woman suddenly inheriting the crown of over 20 realms and the headship of the Commonwealth and the burden of great office, how did she find the strength to make and keep her famous vow to devote her whole life to our service? Well, Her late Majesty would often have meditated on the words of the ancient Hebrew Scripture in Deuteronomy. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified. For the Lord your God goes with you. He will never leave or forsake you."

As we saw in today's funeral, that conviction was the ultimate source of her ultimate strength. The strength of a woman who was not afraid to enrol in the defence of her country and of civilization against Nazi terror. The strength of a Queen who was not afraid to both preserve tradition and to embrace change during an uncertain time. The strength of a mother and a grandmother who was not afraid to lead her family through adversity.

And the strength of a believer who was not afraid of death.

So we can all, regardless of our religious or spiritual beliefs, join in prayerful hope that she will hear from her master those words upon which she would have meditated: "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter now into the joy of your Lord."

Here in Alberta, she will be remembered forever. In schools. In roadways. In mountains. In the newly renamed Queen Elizabeth the Second building behind us. But the way that we can most intimately memorialize her is to find small ways, each of us in our own lives, to emulate those virtues that she personified. Of duty. Of honour. Of dignity. And of service to others.

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon her. And may God save the King.