

How Adelaide Anglicans greeted a new queen

How an Adelaide Anglican priestâ??s words helped to identify both the sadness and the hope embodied by the change in monarch.

By Dr Sarah Black, Archivist Anglican Diocese of Adelaide

From 1944 to 1969, the Reverend Arthur Curran ran a popular 5KA radio show called the â??Church of England Half Hourâ?•, which he used to address topics of religious and social concern.

On the 10 of February 1952 he reflected on the big news of the week, Queen Elizabethâ??s accession to the throne.

The Reverend Arthur Curran

It might seem surprising to us now, but his words were not of joy. Reverend Curran spoke of the shock and sadness of the death of King George, â??our late beloved monarchâ?•.

He remembered the torrid times in which King George came to the throne â?? the constitutional crisis (abdication of his brother King Edward), the war that engulfed Britain and the world within a year and half after that, and the staunch faithfulness King George and family had shown to their country and people during Britainâ??s darkest years.

â??Do you remember the story of his visit to the East End of London after a bad bombing raid, when one of the crowd cried to him â??Youâ??re a great kingâ??. Swiftly he replied, â??And you are a great peopleâ??.

â??Therein, surely, lay the secret of his greatness. It was â?¦ in the way he identified himself within his people, being one with them while never losing his royal dignity.â?•

Reverend Curran reflected on King Georgeâ??s deep religious faith and his familyâ??s witness to the nation of â??happy Christian family lifeâ?•. He spoke to the grief of the royal family in the present moment â?? â??We have lost a gracious King; they have lost a devoted husband, son and father.â?•

â??Our sorrow at the death of the King is tempered by the knowledge that his daughter, Queen Elizabeth, will take his place, not only as legal head of her people, but as leader and example as were her parents before her. â?¦

Bishop Bryan Robin escorting Queen Elizabeth into St Peterâ??s Cathedral, Adelaide, during the 1954 Royal Visit with guard of honour of CEBS members. Credit: State Library of SA

â??As we remember her youth and comparative inexperience â?¦ let us also remember her vow to the Commonwealth when she came of age, to serve her people to the best of her ability, and also her plea at the same time for her people to co-operate with her in fulfilling her pledge. A plea she renewed last week.

â??The world over, her loyal subjects pray for her at this time that she will be strengthened in her hour of sorrow and in her duties of office that lie ahead. There will be more than lip-service as they pray: â??Long live the queenâ??.â?•

â?? â??The King is deadâ??. We pray for him, as we pray for all the faithful sons of the Church, that his soul may rest in peace, and we place in imperishable position memories of a gracious Christian monarch.

â??We pray for his widow, his mother and children that in their sorrow they may be strengthened and comforted. And for our gracious sovereign lady, Queen Elizabeth II, we pray Divine strength and guidance, while offering her our loyalty, homage and affection, doing so in the time honoured words: â??God Save The Queenâ??.â?•

Reverend Curranâ??s words helped to identify both the sadness and the hope embodied by the change in monarch. The prayer â??long live the queenâ?• has been answered richly, as we commemorate 70 years of her reign. She has been, in her own way and for her own times, as staunch and as faithful as her father.

Princess Elizabeth, aged about 10, with her father King George VI, the then Queen Elizabeth, who became the Queen Mother, and Princess Margaret â?? plus the usual assortment of the dogs

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