

Excerpts from the Queen's Christmas Day Messages used in our Morning Service – 11 September 2022

1950s

(Margaret Dundas) Since my accession ten months ago, your loyalty and affection have been an immense support and encouragement. I want to take this Christmas Day, my first opportunity, to thank you with all my heart. At my Coronation next June, I shall dedicate myself anew to your service. I want to show that the Crown is not merely an abstract symbol of our unity, but a personal and living bond between you and me.

(Janice Inglis) The Commonwealth bears no resemblance to the empires of the past. It is an entirely new conception, built on the highest qualities of the spirit of man: friendship, loyalty, and the desire for freedom and peace. To that new conception of an equal partnership of nations and races I shall give myself heart and soul every day of my life.

1960s

(Dianne Kurth) This year I should like to speak especially to women. In many countries custom has decreed that women should play a minor part in public affairs. It is difficult to realise that it was less than fifty years ago that women in Britain were first given the vote. Yet, in spite of these disabilities, it has been women who have breathed gentleness and care into the harsh progress of mankind.

(Marjory Tweedie) The struggles against inhuman prejudice, against squalor, ignorance, and disease, have always owed a great deal to the determination and tenacity of women. The devotion of nuns and nurses, the care of mothers and wives, the service of teachers, and the conviction of reformers are the real and enduring presents which women have always given. In the modern world the opportunities for women to give something of value to the human family are greater than ever, because, through their own efforts, they are now beginning to play their full part in public life.

1980s

(Elaine Whitefoot) Representatives from 42 different parts of the world gathered to attend the Commonwealth Games. There are many unpublicised meetings, but it is not often that the Commonwealth is able to get together for a great public ceremony. On this occasion it was sport that brought them to Scotland, and they came to compete and to enjoy themselves. We entertained them all in the garden

of our home in Edinburgh, and I was very conscious that each of the athletes I met represented a country as different and interesting as those I had been able to visit during the year.

(Chris Whitesmith) Last June, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of D-Day. That occasion in Normandy was a memorable one for all of us who were able to be there. It was partly a day of sadness, as we paid our respects to those who died for us, but it was also a day full of comradeship and hope. For me, perhaps the most lasting impression was one of thankfulness that the forty intervening years have been ones of comparative peace.

(Campbell Martin) Sooner or later we all become aware of the passing of the years, but every now and then we get a sharp reminder that time is moving on rather quicker than we expected. This happened to me last month when we celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. I was very touched that so many of you were kind enough to send messages of good wishes. There is no point in regretting the passage of time. Experience should help us to take a more balanced view of events and to be more understanding about the foibles of human nature.

1990s

(Pat Marwick) I shall never forget the State Visit of President Mandela. The most gracious of men has shown us all how to accept the facts of the past without bitterness, how to see new opportunities as more important than old disputes and how to look forward with courage and optimism. His example is a continuing inspiration to the whole Commonwealth and to all those everywhere who work for peace and reconciliation.

(Helen McKnight) As a daughter, a mother and a grandmother, I often find myself seeking advice, or being asked for it, in all three capacities. No age group has a monopoly of wisdom, and indeed I think the young can sometimes be wiser than us. But the older I get, the more conscious I become of the difficulties young people have to face as they learn to live in the modern world. We parents and grandparents must learn to trust our children and grandchildren as they seize their opportunities, but we can, at the same time, caution and comfort if things go wrong, or guide and explain.

(Rachel McKenzie) Last June Prince Philip and I gave a party for 900 of Britain's Young Achievers. Buckingham Palace was brimming with young people who, in their short lives, have already set an example to us all: they are living proof that the timeless virtues of honesty, integrity, initiative and compassion are just as important today as they have ever been.

(Ian Watt) We hear much of 'public life' - the hurly-burly of Parliament, the media, big business, city life. But for most people their contribution, at whatever age, is made quietly through their local communities just like so many of those Young Achievers. To most of them, service is its own reward. Their 'public life' is their church, their school, their sports club, their local council.

2000s-2020s

(Margaret Redpath) The true measure of Christ's influence is not only in the lives of the saints but also in the good works quietly done by millions of men and women day in and day out throughout the centuries. Many will have been inspired by Jesus' simple but powerful teaching: love God and love thy neighbour as thyself - in other words, treat others as you would like them to treat you. I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that day brings, and to put my trust in God.

(Margaret Burniston) To mark my 90th birthday, volunteers and supporters of the six hundred charities of which I have been patron came to a lunch in The Mall. Many of these organisations are modest in size but inspire me with the work they do. From giving friendship and support to our veterans, the elderly or the bereaved; to championing music and dance; providing animal welfare; or protecting our fields and forests, their selfless devotion and generosity of spirit is an example to us all.

(Tracy Gibson) Reflecting on these events makes me grateful for the blessings of home and family, and in particular for 70 years of marriage. I don't know that anyone had invented the term "platinum" for a 70th wedding anniversary when I was born. You weren't expected to be around that long. Even Prince Philip has decided it's time to slow down a little – having, as he economically put it, "done his bit". But I know his support and unique sense of humour will remain as strong as ever, as we enjoy spending time this Christmas with our family and look forward to welcoming new members into it next year.

(Brian Jilks) Through the many changes I have seen over the years, faith, family and friendship have been not only a constant for me but a source of personal comfort and reassurance. We should take comfort that while we may have more still to endure, better days will return: we will be with our friends again; we will be with our families again; we will meet again. But for now, I send my thanks and warmest good wishes to you all.