

A Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at the Washington National Cathedral

Madam Vice President; Madame Speaker; Leader McCarthy; Governors; Senators; Justices; esteemed colleagues from Realms and the Commonwealth; and the Diplomatic Corps welcome and thank you all for joining us today.

I would also like to thank Dean Randolph Hollerith and the Washington National Cathedral, the Bishop and Presiding Bishop, for holding this service in honour of Her Late Majesty The Queen. Their consideration and efforts in a short space of time have been outstanding. We salute too and thank the wonderful Colour Guards and musicians.

The Queen was a great friend and admirer of the United States. She paid some 6 official visits in total – many more to the Kentucky stables – addressing Congress as well as speaking to Presidents and attending football and baseball games and commemorative events such as America's Bicentennial and the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement. She well understood the affinity between the US and the UK stressing not just our common heritage and kinship but our common values. To Congress She said that "some people believe that power grows from the barrel of a gun. We have gone a better way; our societies rest on mutual agreement, on contract and on consensus."

The values She personified and the traditions She upheld are fundamentally in their essence the same that underpin America and Her institutions, indeed guide the Commonwealth and all those who cherish democracy. She was proud that the values begun by the Magna Carta had their vivid restatement through the Founding Fathers.

That is why, I think, Her death has touched so many people round the world and especially here. As America celebrated with us The Queen's 70 years on the throne earlier this year, so America has mourned in solidarity. We have been humbled and honoured by the immense number of tributes – from the President and First Lady and you Madam Vice President being some of the first world leaders to come in person to sign the condolence book, through to the two House and Senate Resolutions and the presentation by you Madam Speaker of the Stars and Stripes that flew at half-mast over the Capitol, to the many tributes from Governors and Mayors, the Empire State lit in purple and silver; the Union Jack flag lowered to half-mast at the site of the battle of New Orleans – the last time US and UK militaries fought as enemies – with Her deep sense of history I think She would have liked – to the flowers and messages from ordinary Americans some of whom queued for hours at the Embassy. Biden State funeral.

This affinity was exemplified by The Queen's ordering – after 9/11, whose anniversary we commemorated recently – the Star Spangled Banner to be played at Buckingham Palace and the Star and Stripes to be flown on the 10 and 20th

anniversaries at half-mast.

In a moving reciprocal gesture Mayor Bowser ordered Union Jacks to fly at half-mast along Pennsylvania Avenue. We thank you from King Charles and The Royal Family down for these amazing tributes. That the President was the first sitting President we believe to attend a State Funeral is another deep honour. The tributes from all former Presidents have been very moving.

This is a Service of Thanksgiving. There have been plenty of lively and happy stories about The Queen. Many people in this Cathedral today have met Her whether in America, in the Realms and Commonwealth and other countries or in the UK. You know Her dignity, Her warmth and kindnesses but also Her quick-wittedness, Her mischievous smile. My favourite story out of so many concerns an agricultural Show in the east of the UK. One of the exhibitors went up to a middle-aged lady in a headscarf and tweeds. "Excuse me", said the exhibitor, "but you do look an awful lot like The Queen". "How very reassuring", The Queen replied.

She sought to move with the times. She was the archetypal Bond Girl, parachuting into the London Olympics; she poured tea for Paddington Bear as well as heads of State, and here in the US She was honoured to receive the Ruth Bader Ginsburg award for Women in Leadership – one of the very few times, we believe, that She accepted a non-State award – you can check it out on the Buckingham Palace YouTube entry.

President Biden said that The Queen defined an era. I think that nails it. She was a remarkable woman – coming to the Throne at 25; she saw decades of history and met hundreds of world leaders including 13 of 14 US Presidents during Her reign; She was present at the opening of the United Nations in London. She was very proud to head the Commonwealth. Whenever I met The Queen or even saw her on TV She seemed to embody the whole nation and its long history. The human and the heroic coming together in one extraordinary person, exemplified so well by the majesty and history of Monday's State Funeral.

I would like to close by remarking on that duty and public service. Her now famous pledge at the age of 21 to devote Her whole life "whether it be long or short ..to your service" still has the power to animate us today and has been clearly restated by the new King Charles III. We are grateful for Her long life and, as King Charles said, "we draw strength from the light of her example".

For me personally, it has been an immense honour to serve as Her Majesty's Ambassador from Afghanistan to America, and points in-between. The Embassy and I are now very proud to serve our new King.

Thank you.

Video of the full event is available on [The Washington National Cathedral's YouTube channel](#).