

“All the nice girls love a sailor.” [Or so sailors tell girls...] These opening words of the song, “Ship Ahoy!” have, however, never been so true as when a certain young lady met a sailor, married and subsequently governed a home, a family, a Church - and a nation. That lady will be celebrating her 90th birthday this month; she is, of course, our Sovereign Lady, Elizabeth.

I used to declare myself, quite unabashedly, a royalist. However, I’m no longer sure that’s the right word; in fact, I am an enthusiastic Elizabethan. That’s not to say I will disregard our monarchy in its next few successions (assuming I live long enough!), rather, I am more aware of the good fortune to have lived during the current reign.

Let’s face it, many previous incumbents of this royal office have had some serious shortcomings, whether by dint of their day’s society, lack of wisdom or just having been not very good at it. (For example, I, personally, am alarmed at the idea of having to cope with life under Henry VIII - and appalled at the incompetence of George IV.)

In the book of Genesis there is a king who is a bit of a mystery: there is no real detailed record of his deeds but we have his name: Melchizedek, which is Hebrew for (my) king of righteousness. He was king of Salem, which means peace. Names really meant something back then, so it is not unreasonable to conclude that his success was entirely summed up in his name and title.

The name Elizabeth comes from the Hebrew name Elisheva, compounding the words for God and oath or abundance. It also has been a good name to describe our queen’s reign: one of faithfulness in the oath to God she made at her coronation and, of course, her abundance of years with their accompanying wisdom, used so often for the greatest benefit in matters of hearth, unity and state.

I hope this doesn’t come across as sycophantic - see it as a statement of admiration. I mainly expressed my views in the letter of June 2012 (which you’ll find on our website), therefore the main point I want to make on this occasion is that we’re just so plain lucky to be around here and now. I would argue that by realising this, the approaching celebrations will be that much more joyous by knowing our good fortune - or put another way, counting our blessings.

Finally, as our queen well knows, her throne is temporal but her prayers for us and ours for her do make a difference. Her own inspiration, the Lord Jesus, can be our inspiration, too. Let’s celebrate that which has been and is still good. By the grace of God. Amen. Amen. Amen.