

Midweek Video Message

Philip the Asylum-Seeker

Like many of us I've been reading a lot over the last few days about the life of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Much has been written about his service to the nation – as a naval officer in World War II, as consort and husband to Queen Elizabeth for over 70 years, his passion for conservation and his support for children and young people through the DofE Award Scheme.

But I have been particularly struck by how Prince Philip's early life began as a refugee and an asylum seeker. He had to flee the land of his birth at the age of 18 months after a military coup in Greece, he was brought ashore to France in an orange crate for a cot. He was then passed around from country to country and family member to family member after his parents split up, often skint and alone, until he eventually found some stability at boarding school in Britain and then joining the Royal Navy as a young cadet – if you can count signing up for the Royal Navy in 1939 as stability!

Prince Philip's life is a reminder that Britain has a long and proud history of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees to our shores, and of valuing the contribution they make to our national life. And what an amazing contribution he has made.

The Bible has a lot to say about how we should treat aliens and foreigners. Repeatedly in the book of Exodus we read, 'Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you know how it feels to be a foreigner, for you were aliens in Egypt.'

My prayer for our country as we remember Prince Philip is that this land will continue to be a safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers, where they are made welcome and enabled to make a contribution to our national life, just as he has, and that in so doing we will model something of the inclusive welcome of God's kingdom.

**Ven Mark Ireland,
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