

**Address at the funeral of Trevor Boycott, TSSF
Wednesday 9th January 2013**

May my words and our thoughts be in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We meet in the season of light. The people around us may think that Christmas is over; we however will go on for several weeks celebrating the light of Christ in our midst.

This season of light is a journey from one discovery to another ... Discoveries about God, about the miracle of Bethlehem and the mystery of the Word made flesh, and about the ways God makes known the love and the life which are his gifts to us.

The prophet Isaiah had heralded the coming of the light with words which are familiar at this time of the year:

Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Whether we are recalling the OT prophecy, or the even better known story of the journey of the Wise Men, we have the light - or the star - and the reminder that the light comes to pierce and dispel the darkness.

And that brings us closer to where we are today. Today, we are people walking in darkness, in 'the valley of the shadow of death'. We have lost a friend, a brother in Christ, and we have come especially to surround Rachel, Clare and their family with our love and support. We have come too to celebrate the life, faith and witness of Trevor as he has entered into God's realm of eternal light.

But before we leave the Epiphany story, we must not forget the symbolic gifts presented by the wise men. For the gifts they bring - gold, frankincense and myrrh - are about the meaning and purpose of Jesus' life. The wise men's gifts prefigure the gifts with which Jesus blessed the world he came to save.

Gold speaks of kingship, of worldly power and wealth; and Jesus came with the good news of the kingdom of God. Frankincense speaks of worship and of priesthood; and Jesus came as the great high priest of the new covenant between God and God's people. Myrrh speaks of anointing and embalming; and Jesus came through his own suffering and death to sanctify our share in the struggles of the world.

So this season of light, and this story, are about the life of God pervading, and sanctifying all of human life. And that includes all that we long for in

our broken world. Three gifts, which can symbolise the kingdom, the life of faith, and our participation in the world's suffering.

Trevor was born in Halifax in 1950 and grew up with his sister Brenda in Todmorden. He lived in West Yorkshire up to the time he met Rachel and moved to the North East. He had been involved with the Scouting movement, and his sister remembers vividly his collection of models - steam trains, small cars and buses.

Trevor and Rachel met through their mutual search for health and wholeness, and were married here in Whitley Bay in 1996. During the 17 years of their marriage, Trevor has had to contend with a long series of challenges to his health, but that has not deterred him from active involvement in a range of concerns for our world, among them justice and peace, and support for disabled people. Within the worshipping life of the Church, Trevor enjoyed being part of the bell-ringing team at St Paul's, being part of a singing group here at St Mary's and, for a time, leading the group of lay intercessors.

Many of us knew Trevor in the Third Order of the Society of St Francis. It was as a tertiary that Trevor found the framework and the freedom to deepen his spiritual life. His spiritual director has spoken of the commitment Trevor made 'to renew constantly his covenant with his God through prayer.' Trevor greatly valued the discipline of his Rule of Life. Prayer was the bedrock of his life, and many tributes have been received in the last week or so speaking of how Trevor's life was an embodiment of Franciscan values. He was a deep well of friendship and compassion. One summed him up by saying 'Trevor was, for me, an embodiment of all three Notes of the Third Order' (this is, humility, love and joy). As a tertiary, Trevor used both his administrative and pastoral skills here in the Newcastle Area as Area Minister as well as further afield. He made lots of friends and gained much admiration and gratitude for the trips he organised to Walsingham.

But alongside this rather earnest talk about virtues and values we must not forget Trevor's smile and sense of humour. One distant friend has written, 'As a tertiary with a complex set of disabilities Trevor never failed to make me laugh!'

Trevor first became a tertiary in the Skipton and Bradford Area. It was there that he first knew Allan Marks, who might well have been standing where I am now had he not already agreed to conduct another funeral today. He is truly sorry he can't be here with us. One of Allan's most vivid recollections is Trevor's stag night in Whitley Bay. 'It wasn't too wild a night,' says Allan, 'but it was amongst quite a few of us tertiaries that Trevor enjoyed the fun of that evening beginning with a few jars of real ale at the Fat Ox and ending up at the hotel where he was spending the night, and where the landlord had some whisky on offer ...'

Allan then goes on to speak of how Trevor had developed a great love of, and devotion to, Our Lady, and of Trevor's fervent encouragement of others in this and other aspects of the Christian life.

I have been able to do little more than paint a portrait in very broad brush strokes. Most of you will have anecdotes to provide the finer points of detail. What I hope to have shown is that Trevor too travelled towards the light, following the star, and bringing his gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. He embraced the whole of human life, and was used by God as a herald of the kingdom, a part of God's royal priesthood of all believers, and an instrument of God's peace in a world of brokenness, suffering and injustice. That is, I believe, a profoundly Franciscan way of looking at the world, the Church, and the work of God's grace.

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'
Let us pray for one another today and in the coming weeks that God will dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

I leave you with the wisdom of Rabindranath Tagore:

'Death is not extinguishing the light,
but putting out the lamp, because the dawn has come.'

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant Trevor with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. Amen.

Canon Richard Hill, TSSF