

Pauline Taperell

Eulogy given by the Revd. Stuart Foster on Monday 31st March 2014, slightly edited.

Faith is belief with strong conviction; a firm belief in something for which there may be no tangible proof. It is complete trust in or devotion to God in Christ. Pauline was a faith-full person, a rare gem that won the admiration of all gathered here today. It is no exaggeration to say faith is possibly the single-most important element of the Christian life.



Having been blind from birth Pauline, led the way in being certain of what she did not see. Without a strongly defined discipline to subject ourselves to, it would be all too easy for us to drift and for our spiritual life to fall into neglect. Pauline would have none of that and was intent on disciplining her life according to the Franciscan Way. The people that desire to be useful to God and a blessing to men and women around them must above all things be a spiritual people. Pauline was one such.

Saint James in his Epistle spoke of both faith supported by works as being characteristics of 'faith-full' people. Here again, Pauline was a woman of works as well as faith. She was also very committed to fund raising for charities and church events as I found from the very outset of my arrival here in Bottesford in 2005. She did not let her condition hold her back from doing anything. I recall her setting off on a tandem, with Lucy, her younger daughter, to raise money for the Historic Churches Restoration Fund. I can still hear her giggles as we pulled her leg about the journey that was ahead of her warning her not to stop at every pub she passed.

It was to be another year when she joined myself and a team of church members as we set off to beat the bounds of the Benefice walking from Bottesford through Muston to Barkestone, all the while battling against wind and driving rain (the sort that wets you through to the skin)! A passing ambulance even stopped to offer assistance to Pauline who in low back summer shoes was splashing more than most of us. In typical fashion she refused (sadly as almost all of us were hoping to hop into the ambulance with her), but instead we all walked on. At the end of the walk we retreated to a pub at Redmile and I even got a picture of her at the bar!

As her family tell us and as we all know, Pauline had an infectious giggle. To her family this created what they called her 'jelly belly'. Her granddaughter, Annabel often sat on granny's belly to have a jelly belly ride.

I admired the staggering ease with which she would undertake readings in church from her brail scriptures and how she read with feeling, conviction and commitment. As a Tertiary Franciscan she sought through their area meetings to stretch her faith and understanding of the scriptures. For many years until his death, Pauline took spiritual direction from a priest friend of hers. While committed to family responsibilities and engaged in the ordinary tasks of life, the Third Order offers a life of challenge and support for those who are called to a deeper commitment to Christ, their Lord and Master, to a life under vow. I have met few people so committed to this calling and as a Benedictine Oblate I shared many similar aspirations.

Blessed with a loving family to whom she was devoted, Pauline gave as much as she was given. I recall witnessing this devotion when she had her 70th birthday party held in the garden on Cox Drive. Lucy built a particularly strong relationship with her mother and will miss the hugs she used to receive. She and Pauline were often on the same wave-length and this intuitive understanding meant they were on top of each other's feelings without words being spoken.

Pauline had a very special bond with all her guide dogs. Each dog enabled her to have so much freedom and ensured she got some good exercise, keeping her going at a good pace. Regularly we would all see her doing the 'soft shoe shuffle' to St Mary's whether mid-week or on a Sunday, as well as for special mid-week events. Before getting her last dog Karli (her 5th dog) she was told that she was a bit too slow for a new dog, so she pushed herself by going on her exercise bike and for walks every day to increase her pace (some might have thought she was preparing for the Tour de France).

This typifies what a very determined person she was. If she was told that she would struggle to do something it spurred her on even more. For example, when she was told it would be too difficult to climb 90ft up St Mary's church to the base of the spire she didn't let it stop her. I was scared stiff when she said she wanted to do it – and she did still with a smile on her face!

For her 75th birthday she went gliding and it meant so much to her when she was able to visit Australia for Christopher's christening. She hadn't flown for approximately 50 years and her nerves showed in the fact that she managed to spill a little bit of everything down her dress

on the way there, it really was quite an achievement. I'm told Pauline loved every second that she spent with Christopher.

Whereas most Mothers Union members are committed supporters of their branch – not so Pauline, she was a member of both the Bingham and Bottesford Mother's Union. She attended as many church services, prayer and lent groups as she was able to, always racing up and down the village, and she was particularly happy to have joined the choir again and rarely missed a practise or service.

Returning to her work for charity I will never forget her generosity when in 2007 I went to walk and climb in the Himalayan Foothills for Oxfam – and their work amongst street children of Delhi. Her faith and involvement in the world at large was as intense as the life she loved and lived.

In recent months the support of friends and neighbours has enabled her to do more than she would have otherwise been able to. Her family would like to thank all who have of late helped Pauline, it really does warm the heart to see such kindness. One of the things often said is that the church needs more Christians - but it is my belief that will only be so when we have 'better Christians', people who subject themselves to a discipline, as Pauline did, as a Tertiary Franciscan.

When Pauline found out how ill she was, she showed very little fear and was very strong, drawing on her faith and able to face up to what was happening and choose her own hymns and readings for this service and to request I took the service – I am humbled by this request.

Pauline's family would like me to thank everyone for overwhelming support throughout their Mum's illness and subsequent home calling. It is so comforting to know how many lives she touched (represented by the large number in church today) and how fondly she will be remembered by us all.

May this faith-full person now rest in peace and rise in glory to see for herself he who is the Light of the World, who despite her blindness, has illuminated her life and by association ours too.