

## TONY HUBBARD RIP

It is a privilege to have a former Rector here to herald the Gospel for one of his former Churchwardens. Indeed several of my colleagues are here today who worked closely with Tony and who treasured his support and wise counsel over the years. I am no exception.

When Virginia spoke so warmly of those who have said 'they don't make them like that any longer', I have to agree although with some sadness. He was of that generation who knew that clergy didn't just work on a Sunday! He knew and valued the hidden life of a priest's quiet pastoral and sacramental ministry. When I took Communion to his home in recent months, he and Susan were the 'model' congregation of prayerfulness and a deep personal spirituality, and always so thankful how such glimpses of the numinous were indeed glimpses of the divine presence.

Tony believed in the centrality of the Christian faith at the centre of this town, quite literally, and the fantastic views from his own home could not miss the living stones of this very beautiful place, this sacred home. Here, where so much historic, communal faith has been nurtured, nourished and lived out, over so many centuries, is 'home'.

When I arrived during the pandemic, Liz and I were introduced to the new dog, Rosie, early on and the special artificial grass for her in the courtyard. It wasn't perhaps one of his better decisions to take on the demands of a puppy, but Tony could be wonderfully stubborn as much as he could

be wonderfully sensitive and kind – not just to animals of course but to all of us gathered here today. We all remember fondly how ‘dapper’ he was (I think he must have had ‘shares’ in Alexander’s on the Thoroughfare) and I can say with some envy how his collection of Rye pottery was 20 times the size of my own. He certainly had ‘good taste’!

All our lives have been touched and enriched by Tony’s gentle and generous Christian soul, his humility and compassion, and that great raising of the eyebrow and smile he had - when thinking of particular ‘challenging’ people with whom we had to work alongside; sometimes words were not needed, were they? As George Herbert said in his famous poem about the gift of ‘prayer’, it was “something understood”.

Tony is remembered fondly by so many of us as someone who pondered long and hard about our human nature, our foibles and occasional indiscretion, yet he was always hopeful rather than critical of how we could grow and mature and forgive more readily and openly. Tony pondered long and hard how Scripture reveals the incarnational goodness, and hopefulness of God, which doesn’t need to be loud or demonstrative at all. The ‘still small voice of calm’ was something Tony treasured and intuitively shared with us. That is certainly true - as such an inspiring, loving husband and father, and grandfather too.

If I may share this poem with you by Billy Collins:

“The dead are always looking down on us, they say, while we are putting on our shoes or making a sandwich, they are looking down through the glass-bottom boats of heaven as they row themselves through eternity.

They watch the tops of our heads moving below on earth, and when we lie down in a field or on a couch, drugged perhaps by the hum of a warm afternoon, they think we are looking back at them,

which makes them lift their oars and fall silent and wait, like parents, for us to close our eyes.”

As today, we say our own private, as well as public, farewell and thank you to God for Tony’s faithful life... and as we look up at the roof of this church, an upside down ‘boat’ – and the gateway to heaven – let us pray that his homeward journey and welcome into paradise is assured and, indeed, ‘something understood.’

May Tony, in the words of a famous former Dean of York, “rise up in the life of grace, and abide and advance in it, until he comes to the city of light and joy”

Amen.