

Bertie, RIP

It was only a few weeks ago that I was privileged to bless not only a new art studio in the garden of Apothecary House: but also something much more important: to bless and renew vows for the Marriage of Claire and Bertie, exchange new rings, and to cement what we already knew – the love of Christ in their marriage, ‘till death us do part’, and the creative love of Christ in and through their family and friends.

No mention of ‘Brexit’ in the feast afterwards, thankfully, and no mention of how we so often forget that Christ’s love transcends all political, national, and international barriers!

I sometimes think that it helps to have a sexy accent like Bertie’s, that debonair look and most stylish of hats... to draw us in to what really mattered to him the most: a life of faith, deep commitment to his God and to his family, and an even deeper commitment of prayer for all the suffering in the world today.

I never knew if Bertie would turn up at 8am or 10am on Sunday or again, at 10am on Thursdays for our mid-week mass. He could come by foot, on his bike or in his stylish black ‘love’ Beetle! But I would always be greeted afterwards by his warmest of smiles, those intense and penetrating eyes, and his greatest conversational desire to share his passion for following and loving His Lord and Ours, that great Shepherd of the Sheep. How in those last agonising days of cancer care, he clung on to his favourite woolly lamb and challenged us to see in his suffering the suffering of Christ himself, the gentle

and merciful Lamb of God? He literally took on and 'wore' those famous words from William Blake's most famous of poems...

"Little lamb, who made thee, dost thou know who made, thee?"

Many of you will know those same words set to the haunting music by Tavener – they literally search us out to discover the One who made us and shaped us - from the time of our baptism. Christ the Good Shepherd cares deeply for us, to the end, and never gives up on us.

Bertie had so many achievements, successes, and joys, as well as sorrows, but he was completely humble and accepting of them all. He mirrored the gentleness and kindness and care of any good shepherd whether in his beloved Suffolk or, in the heart of Paris.

It was a privilege to know him, and call him our friend, as it is for all of us to pray for his last journey now to meet and greet the Lord he loved so much.

May Bertrand discover all the riches and delights of heaven and the angels' song of welcome: 'Well done, thy good and faithful servant!'

May he rest in peace and rise + in glory.

AMEN.