

CANON CHRISTOPHER
HOWARD JOSEPH TUCKWELL

1945 - 2020

ADMINISTRATOR OF WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL
2008 - 2020

IN MEMORIAM



OBITUARY

CANON CHRISTOPHER would have turned 75 years of age, the usual age when Catholic priests retire, in September. A few months ago, the Vicar General asked him about his retirement hopes and plans, and what assistance he might need with these. 'I am a man under orders', he replied in his commanding but kind voice, 'I will go when I am told to go, and I will do what I am told to do.' He would have liked to continue the sterling work as Administrator of Westminster Cathedral he had been doing since 2008 and before that as the Sub-Administrator. But it was not to be.

Canon Christopher died peacefully on 26 June at the Royal Trinity Hospice in Clapham where he was receiving end of life care. Cardinal Vincent's visit the previous day gave great consolation to the Canon who had stepped down as the Cathedral Administrator on 13 June due to failing health and the awareness that someone else had to take charge. When notice of his death was circulated an extraordinary number of messages of condolence and tribute were received, a reflection of the esteem in which he was held by people from a variety of backgrounds and whose lives had been touched by Canon Christopher's life and ministry.

He was an indefatigable pastor who was totally committed to the priesthood, working long hours punctuated by short 'power naps' in his armchair or at his desk. He was a gifted pastor and administrator; he gave to individuals wise counsel and to congregations thought-provoking homilies. In social settings he enjoyed and could tell humorous stories and he could sing well into the evening and be up characteristically early the following morning, ready for all that the day might bring. He was faithful to his regime of personal prayer and to the liturgy of the Church whether in an informal setting on pilgrimage or in the grandeur of the Cathedral. Well-read and well-travelled, he wore his considerable learning lightly so that as a pastor he remained easy to engage with and as a leader he was authoritative, shrewd and inclusive.

Christopher Tuckwell, the son of Bernard and Muriel Tuckwell, was born on 25 September 1945 in Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey. He attended Malvern College from 1959-64 before going to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst until 1966. He was commissioned into the Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment and served as a platoon commander in Germany and Bahrain. He had a temporary attachment to the Sultan of Muscat's armed forces. Back in the UK he was a training officer at the regimental depot in Canterbury and the divisional depot in Basingbourn, Hertfordshire. In 1970 he retired from the Army when his sense of vocation to the priesthood led him to Chichester Theological College from 1970-73. As an Anglican ordinand, he was awarded a Certificate in Theology from Southampton University. During vacations Christopher worked as a nursing orderly at Cromer Hospital. He was ordained as a priest in St Paul's Cathedral on 30 June 1974. His first assignment was to St Matthew's, Upper Clapton as Assistant Curate from 1973-76. He then went to Holy Trinity, Georgetown, St Vincent in the West Indies where he served as Rector until 1985. In addition to parochial ministry Christopher served as a prison chaplain. On his return to the UK he went to Shepherd's Bush, serving as Assistant Curate from 1985-86. He then went to St Mary's, Tottenham as Vicar from 1986-94, and serving as Area Dean for the final three years.

In October 1994 Christopher resigned from his ministry in the Church of England. He, and others, left the Anglican communion following the decision to ordain women to the priesthood. The issue of the authority to take such a decision led Christopher to seek full communion with

the Catholic Church. A pilgrimage to Lisieux and a retreat with the Cistercians in Brittany gave Christopher additional opportunities for prayer and vocational discernment. He was received at the church of the Five Precious Wounds, Stonebridge on 3 November 1994, having moved to live in the presbytery. He continued to live there while doing pastoral work in the parish. The Bishop of Edmonton wrote that Fr Christopher 'will be a great loss to the Church of England and I have no doubt he will prove a splendid priest in the Roman Catholic Church'. How right he was. Christopher was ordained to the priesthood in Westminster Cathedral on 4 December 1995, having been ordained as a deacon on 18 July. Cardinal Basil Hume presided at both ordinations.

Fr Christopher moved from Stonebridge where he served as Assistant Priest in 1996 to take up his appointment at Hemel Hempstead East as Parish Priest where he remained until 2001. During these years he was a chaplain at HMP The Mount. His next appointment was to St Scholastica's, Clapton serving as Parish Priest from 2001-2006 and continuing with prison chaplaincy at HMP Pentonville. In December 2003 Fr Christopher wrote to Cardinal Cormac asking permission to accept the invitation to be the Honorary Regimental Chaplain to the Prince of Wales' Royal Regiment, the successor of the regiment with which he served while in the Army. Permission was given. In May 2004 Fr Christopher was mandated for the ministry of exorcist in the Diocese, a ministry entrusted to priests with proven pastoral ability and deep spirituality. Another sign of Fr Christopher's gift of discernment was his appointment to the selection advisory conference for candidates for the priesthood in March 2007.

In May 2006 Fr Christopher left Clapton to begin his appointment as Sub-Administrator of Westminster Cathedral, going on to become Administrator in 2008. Canon Christopher led the College of Chaplains at the Cathedral by his example of gratitude for the gift of priesthood and faithfulness to prayer and the Mass and by his pastoral concern. He enjoyed many of the elements of his role: greeting VIPs, extending a warm welcome to the many visitors to the Cathedral, and representing the Cathedral and the Diocese for over a decade. The pastoral visit of Pope Benedict XVI in September 2010 was surely a highlight for the Canon.

As Administrator, Canon Christopher cultivated strong ecumenical relations with the Dean and clergy of Westminster Abbey. He became an ecumenical member of the College of Westminster Abbey in 2010. Less well known was his discreet work as a regular and faithful volunteer at The Passage, committed to his weekly visits. He was similarly committed to the weekly Mass celebrated for the Sisters who live at Clergy House. If the Portuguese language in which it was celebrated proved somewhat challenging, the Canon was never deterred and always gave it his best shot!

Canon Christopher's presence and ministry in Clergy House, in the Cathedral and in the parish will be missed. This much respected and loved priest will also be missed across the Diocese and beyond.

May this faithful priest rest in peace and rise in glory.

MGR MARTIN HAYES
Vicar General



I FIRST got to know Canon Christopher through two different connections around the same time, some 12 years ago. One was a mutual friend, to whom he had been very kind during his time at The Five Precious Wounds, Stonebridge. The other was through both of us belonging to a group of Anglican and Catholic clergy who met once a month for lunch. Immediately upon meeting him, I recognised and appreciated his genuine personality and capacity not only for a good lunch, but also for friendship.

We stayed in touch; he was supportive of me as I came to the conclusion that I needed to become a Catholic and he kindly came along to the Mass where I was received into the Catholic Church. I recall now that whenever we met there was also a good meal to be had. This was a theme for so many of his friends, I know. He enjoyed the company of others and understood the importance of sharing good food and drink as a means to maintaining and developing friendship.

When I was asked to come to Westminster Cathedral as Sub-Administrator in 2018, I felt happy that I would have the opportunity to work alongside Canon Christopher, and to support him in his role. Little did we know that serious ill health would so sadly affect him.

Throughout the time of illness, he remained totally interested in the life of the Cathedral and of the Clergy House. I never felt anything other than wholly supported by him in my role, and his advice and guidance, right to the end, was always well considered and to be trusted implicitly. His wide experience of life gave him an understanding of people and their foibles and eccentricities, as well as their intrinsic worth. He was such a wise judge of character, and an honest critic of himself.

The Canon's sense of humour and quick wittedness, were something that all who met him came to appreciate. His love of life, and its infinite variety, made him spot the funny side of so many situations. Where he was there was always laughter to be heard and shared. Even during his solemn and dignified Funeral Mass there were moments when I could almost hear him commenting on the proceedings, with a raising of that distinctive eyebrow.

His death came quickly; I know that many friends and parishioners were shocked by the news. I think he saw the transfer to the hospice as serving him notice, so to speak. One of the doctors spoke with me the day before he died. She said that he seemed ready to go, that he was resigned to it, in fact. I agreed with her but stressed that a vital part of this was the Canon's strong and real faith in Christ's promise of eternal life. Now, we pray that he is experiencing the beginning of that closer life with the Lord whom he loved and served with such unflinching loyalty.

Thanks be to God.

FR DANIEL HUMPHREYS

Acting Administrator of Westminster Cathedral

'NO TONIC, just a dash of bitters.' Poised with our post-Sunday-Mass gins, the Cathedral chaplains knew we had a different sort of person in our midst. Fr Christopher Tuckwell had just arrived, bringing with him a debonair manner and the tone of someone who had been there, seen it, and done it.

I had met Fr Christopher at a meal for priests that we held in the Clergy House – we were seated together – and knew instantly that I wanted him for my Sub-Administrator. I was struck by the way he perfectly inhabited himself; like St Bartholomew, a man without guile, a genuine, honest, wise priest. He was also very funny, using his humour in a self-deprecating way and never to detract from others.

Quickly, Fr Christopher's military career and bearing made itself known (not just through pink gins). A self-possession, firmness of purpose, and methodical manner revealed his Sandhurst training, as did the ease with which he conversed with some of our important (and to me, intimidating) neighbours. From Lord Guthrie, to the Chelsea Royal Hospital and the Wellington Barracks, Fr Christopher shared an ease of conversation and a wide range of shared experiences. It was he who persuaded soldiers from the Wellington Barracks to move the weighty shrine of St John Southworth from St George's Chapel to the centre of the Cathedral to mark the saint's feast, and watching Fr Christopher, it was clear he had lost none of his ability to command.

Yet fine military bearing and authority in speech were not, in Fr Christopher, a mark of a rigid or severe character. He took delight in meeting ordinary people, and had loved his time in the East End of London and St Vincent in the Caribbean. He had a genius for keeping in touch with people and following their progress even after many years. For above all, he was a kind, compassionate man, who would readily forget his own comfort or timetable to help those in need. Each Friday lunchtime he visited the Passage; he assisted any number of troubled souls (often when others had turned them away) - and he visited. Many Cathedral parishioners, frail, forgotten, or sick, received regular visits from Fr Christopher, who never failed to raise their spirits and impart a healing grace.

He was a fine Administrator, too. When I became Administrator, my predecessor told me that he would have the word 'TOILETS' engraved on his tombstone. They were indeed the most problematic issue that an Administrator faced, with clamour from Cathedral users opposed by neighbours and heritage bodies. Canon Christopher won them over and provided a welcome solution; just one example of his ability to cut through difficult issues and ensure that all parties felt part of the end result.

I, personally, will miss a wise, generous, and witty counsellor. With priest colleagues, we are sharing story after story of his friendship. I can't wait to see him again, in the joy of his eternal reward - and perhaps try that pink gin.

May he rest in peace.

MGR MARK LANGHAM

Catholic Chaplain of the University of Cambridge

“TO ME, it is faith – strong, assured and grounded – that lies at the heart of who Canon Christopher is and what he has achieved. It is a faith that has led him, in the words of Cardinal Newman, to follow the kindly light of truth to many places, and for these past twenty years has flourished in the Catholic Church. It is a faith that finds expression in a capacity for friendship; in an interest in, and ability to get on well with, people from all walks of life and nationalities; in a humour that can occasionally catch one off-guard (I have been taken in more often than I should care to admit by a seriously-delivered comment that, in the end, was only designed to make me laugh – at myself, or otherwise); in a certain diplomatic acumen; in a determination to live out the vocation given him by God with faithfulness, and to do the very best for Him in the extremely varied contexts in which he has been called to serve over the years. And in so much else besides.”

FR ALEXANDER MASTER

Private Secretary to HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols

Homily Preached on the Occasion of Canon Christopher's 70th Birthday

WE GRIEVE now, both because we have lost the company of a friend and because, as a Church, we no longer benefit from the ministry of a fine and faithful priest. Father Christopher and I had no time to build on two brief meetings; he was already very ill when I arrived in the Abbey. The warmth of his welcome, though, is one of the moments that I remember particularly clearly from the day of my Installation. He communicated, immediately, a warm and slightly teasing affection. I am deeply saddened not to have known him better. I know I would have enjoyed his company and benefitted from his wisdom. We pray for him and for our brothers and sisters in the Cathedral.

THE VERY REVEREND DR DAVID HOYLE

The Dean of Westminster

Tribute to Canon Christopher, who became an ecumenical member of the College of Westminster Abbey in 2010



I FIRST got to know Canon Tuckwell on a plane from London to Madrid. We were en route to Lima, Peru, at the beginning of a pilgrimage to the holy sites linked to that country's great saints. It was also an adventure. I asked Fr Tuckwell if he knew Peru. He didn't. Did he speak Spanish? No, he didn't. Oh dear, I thought, here we were on a pilgrimage to an exotic land and its leader knew little more about our destination than I did. I rapidly learned that I had no need for concern. Even by the time of our arrival in Lima, our pilgrimage director had revealed what an inspiring leader he was. A fellow priest and fellow pilgrim went a.w.o.l in Madrid airport and we only just got onto our Lima-bound plane in time for take-off. Christopher was supremely calm and reassuring. I saw too where this calm and reassurance came from. As we rose into the air, he was praying rather than wiping his brow in relief.

Canon Tuckwell's self-discipline may have been, in part, derived from his army training and military experience, but this was essentially complemented by his intensely strong faith. On trips we would take a nap, like a good soldier, whenever opportunity arose. Those who sat next to him on coaches and trains know how often those opportunities did arise. He found these brief naps invigorating but those of us lucky enough to travel with him recognised how quickly he would spring into life again. He was ever ready with words of encouragement for those seeking their spiritual directions on these 'holidays with prayer' (as he liked to call them). Just as he could so easily take a nap so he could lead us in prayer, and above all, preach vividly.

Christopher was a brilliant, fluent, profound and relaxed preacher. Watching him, day-by-day, on pilgrimage working through a thread of thought, extending it, elaborating it or varying it was a deep pleasure. Daily Mass, often in strange and improvised circumstances, held us all together and gave the pilgrimages a deep sense of purpose. When I say 'strange' and 'improvised' circumstances I and many fellow pilgrims may variously recall worshipping around trestle tables in hotel lounges, on an improvised stone shelf in the ruins of Palmyra and in a chapel in Otranto in Italy surrounded by cupboards crammed Gothically with the bones of the local martyrs. But Canon Christopher always found the right words to say.

As an exemplary priest he was the centre of our pilgrimages just as he was when he led Friends' day trips and was able to say Mass in more organised surroundings than Peru Ethiopia or Syria might sometimes have offered. Canon Tuckwell was just as much at home at altars in ancient recusant houses, in great Anglican cathedrals, in front of intensely gilded reredoses in Spain or Peru or in curious Catholic chapels in Orkney. He responded deeply to history, and particularly to military history, relishing associations both with the sites of battles and with old Catholic witness. On Orkney, for example, he was just as fascinated by the stories and ruins associated with St Magnus as he was by the wreck-strewn Scaapa Flow.

Canon Tuckwell was an outstanding priest: holy, wise, shrewd, tolerant, witty and prayerful. He was also a wonderful fellow traveller, a truly memorable lunch companion and a man who relished an evening tippie. Westminster Cathedral knows what a great leader he was in terms of his sturdy direction of a complex and demanding institution. He has left us a major legacy. He used to joke that he would be best remembered for his construction of the vitally necessary lavatories. He joked that this was a 'Catholic Relief Act'. But we all know

that he will be properly remembered for much, much more. He was a great Christian and a priest to his fingertips.

PROFESSOR ANDREW SANDERS

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL will not be the same following Canon Christopher Tuckwell's death. For me, it will be difficult to visit the Cathedral without expecting to see (or hear) the reassuring presence of the man who had been at the helm for the past 12 years. For most of those years, Fr Christopher was my parish priest.

I moved to London and the Cathedral parish around the time he was appointed Administrator. He later became my line-manager and, I'm glad to say, friend. When I left Oremus to test a vocation to the religious life, Fr Christopher also agreed to become my spiritual director. So, without Fr Christopher's kind, stable, and pastoral presence, as well that wonderful deep drawl of his, Westminster Cathedral will really never be the same for me.

There are three things that immediately spring to mind when I think of Fr Christopher: laughter, common-sense wisdom, and unassuming pastoral care. All of these qualities may be summed up in what has become a kind of motto I associate with him. Some of you may have heard him say it, too. "Steady, the Buffs!" Thanks to Fr Christopher, this military rallying cry from a regiment amalgamated with his has become a spiritual mantra for me. It was his way of saying: calm down, take your time, don't make any rash decisions, let go and let God – or, as Padre Pio put it: "Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry!" In the midst of some meltdown over a storm-in-a-teacup, Fr Christopher would walk into the Oremus office and announce in his rich, sonorous voice: "Whoa! Steady, the Buffs!" A pause would follow, and then laughter. He was right – stop and think... everything would turn out well. This plain-speaking wisdom provided the basis for a realistic and authentic spirituality.

I was often privileged to accompany Fr Christopher on his parish rounds and saw, at first hand, the way he interacted with his flock. He loved people and enjoyed making time to chat and check-up with all who came his way. He often stopped in the street, waved his hand at someone whom he recognised from Mass, and would greet them with a resonant and distinctive, "Hello! How are you?!" He would then gently listen to their tale. He often said to me that a priest is fundamentally "a man of discretion". With that in mind, and grateful to him for teaching me this important truth, I will attempt to be discreet here and not reveal too much about the meetings that I witnessed between pastor and his people. Except to say, that Fr Christopher was a priest to the core. He loved his people and they loved him. And, despite (or maybe because of) his little imperfections, I loved him too.

If I am ever asked whether any priests have inspired me, I have no hesitation in answering in the affirmative. If they ask the name of the most inspirational, I need not pause to provide an answer: Canon Christopher Tuckwell. I'll miss you, Fr Christopher! (And even as I say that, I hear his voice resound in reply: "Steady, the Buffs!")

May this good and faithful priest now receive his well-deserved reward and rest in peace.

BR GILDAS PARRY O.PRAEM



IT IS rather dispiriting to realise, about someone whom you admired and liked, that you regularly bored them into a state of coma; but so it was for me with Fr Christopher. Four times a year, I subjected him to an ordeal so excruciating that he could scarcely contemplate it with equanimity. I refer, of course to the meetings of the Cathedral Finance and Planning Committee, which I chair.

I would scarcely be half-way through the first item on the agenda before that familiar glazed look would creep across his face together with the movement of his jaw that indicated that he was stifling a yawn. Occasionally he forgot himself and yawned outright and one of my fellow committee members has reminded me that, frequently, his head would fall forward and then jerk back again as he realised that he had nodded off.

We used to joke about the torpor that swiftly overtook him in these meetings and he once kindly told me – with a view, I think, to cheering me up – that mine was not the most tedious committee meeting that he was forced to attend. This made me reflect that, as an Administrator, there were lots of aspects of administration that he did not enjoy.

But, as he also admitted, he found finance especially boring and I never knew whether this was because of or despite the fact that his father had been an accountant.

In some respects, he was very good where finance and money were concerned. In 2018, we had the first Planned Giving Campaign that we had run in the Cathedral for some eight years and Fr Christopher led that campaign from the front. He did not mince his words in telling the congregation about the parlous state of the Cathedral's finances and he emphasised how low the average weekly amount put into the collection was. Many people will remember the way his words, delivered with great drama in that wonderful sonorous voice of his, echoed around the Cathedral: "Two pounds per week! Two pounds!" It was extraordinary with how much emotion he managed to imbue those six words. It was a tour de force and the collection that week and the uplift in giving in the weeks that followed showed how his words had hit home.

If Fr Christopher found meetings soporific and he did not like finance, he certainly liked books. His particular favourite was detective fiction and especially the sub-genre known as Scandinavian noir. He came to every SVP book sale, usually twice. He would come after the 10.30 am Mass and be prepared to be mobbed by the parishioners who always clustered round him leaving him scant time to look at the books; what they did not know was that he had already visited the sale at the very beginning so that he could browse in peace. We used to preselect some for his consideration, but he always wanted to rummage through the stock as well to see if anything else caught his eye. It usually did and he would happily carry away a pile of books.

Of course, what he liked most were people. It was Fr Christopher's great gift that he made everyone think that they were a particular friend of his and special to him and perhaps they were. He certainly looked out for people and would often draw to my attention people in the parish whom he thought would benefit from the support, financial or otherwise, of the SVP. Furthermore, busy though he was, he found time to go and see many people personally. I remember asking an elderly parishioner if she

would like me to arrange a visit from a Eucharistic Minister only to be told that would not be necessary because Fr Christopher brought her Communion every week.

I will miss him very much – as will we all – but it is a consolation to know that he is in a better, happier place and relieved of the burden of attending any more finance committee meetings. May he rest in peace.

LINDA MCHUGH

THE YOUNG Friends came about in 2008 with Canon Christopher Tuckwell's generous support and guiding inspiration, to promote membership of the Friends and organise events. The events encompassed talks and retreats in the Cathedral Hall and Hinsley Room, as well as an annual summer party. They became a mainstay for many young Catholics in London, for whom growing in faith and meeting other Catholics was important.

Many of us were fortunate to get to know Canon Christopher, over a glass of wine at receptions. He enjoyed especially meeting people with whom he could relax and share a few light-hearted stories. All Young Friends helpers had the happiness of experiencing Canon Christopher as a loving shepherd. We appreciated his prayerful wisdom and remain grateful for the expectations he placed on us. It was a blessing to be able to look to him for guidance in decisions.

More recently, some of us have volunteered with the Cathedral's RCIA programme. This was in the context of one of the final times that we heard Canon Christopher preach, as part of an address he gave to RCIA candidates and their companions on Ash Wednesday, 2020.

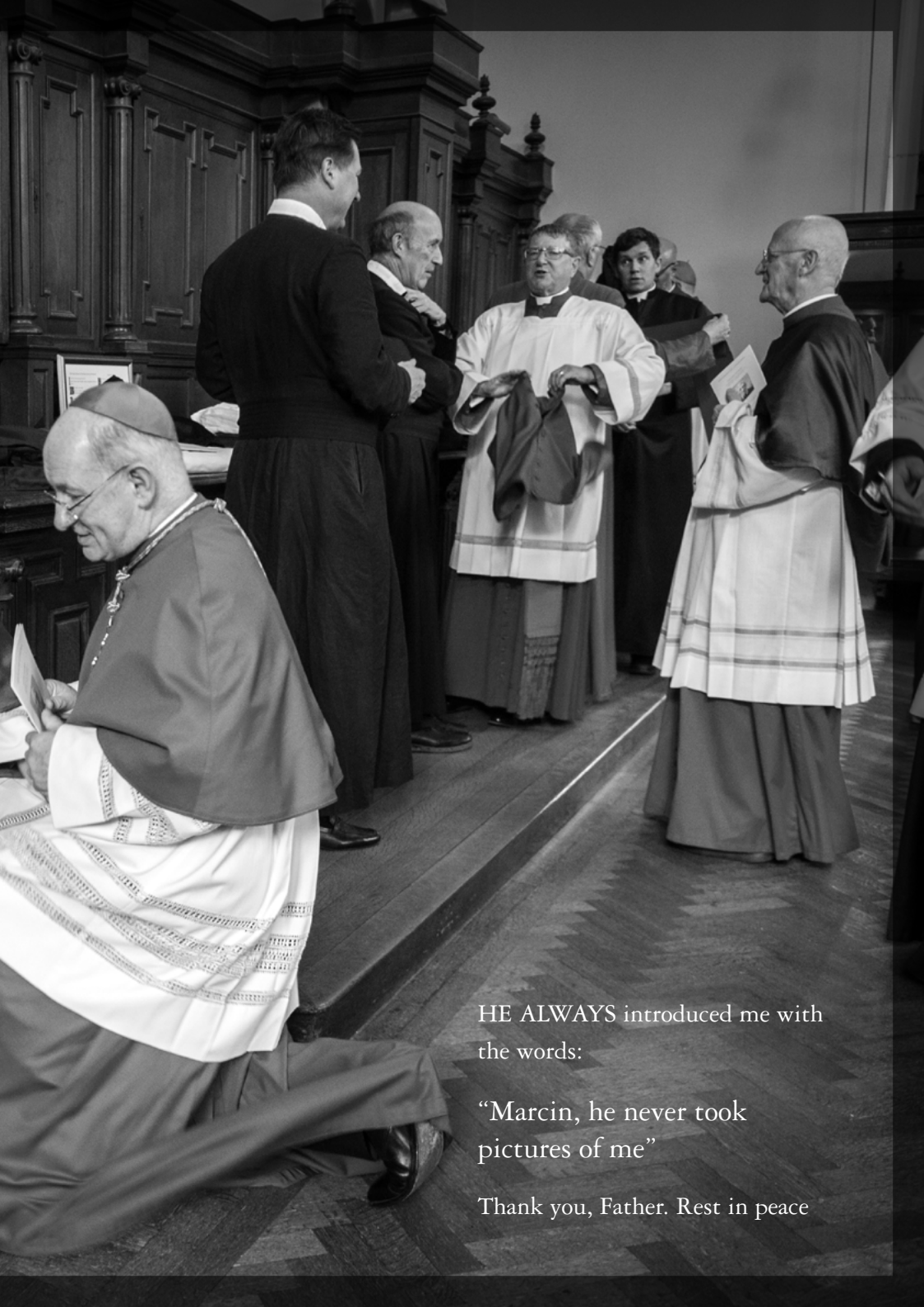
In May, the RCIA catechists took up Pope Francis' call to pray the Rosary daily, using Zoom due to the COVID-19 lockdown and continuing in June and July. Our general intention throughout the current month of July is for the repose of the soul of Canon Christopher.

O God, Thank You for the life of such a generous and warm-hearted priest, who was close to so many and had a great love of You above all things. We pray that Canon Christopher may receive the reward of his labours and enjoy eternal happiness with You in Your Kingdom. Amen.

GERALDINE KAY







HE ALWAYS introduced me with
the words:

“Marcin, he never took
pictures of me”

Thank you, Father. Rest in peace





I HAVE been Treasurer of the Society of Friends of Westminster Cathedral for 17 years, spanning Fr Christopher's periods as Sub-Administrator and Administrator. He also took a keen and active interest in The Passage.

My main memories are not of views he put forward as Chairman of the Friends or as a member of the Board of Trustees of The Passage. It was his quiet, kindly and sometimes quizzical interest in everything that was going on and the people around him.

He was quite often out for a walk in the evening and I remember him remarking on the sheer volume of food that we had picked up as a donation for The Passage – a measure of people's generosity and support for the homeless. He would come over to The Passage van and look at us unloading. Later he was joined by Fr Michael Quaicoe who was equally fond of an evening outing. I often got a cheery hello and a friendly word from them when on my way home.

His main engagement with The Passage was in attending the day centre on Fridays to meet and talk with homeless people. Through his regular visits he also got to know and become friends with many of the staff and volunteers. I particularly remember his friendship with Les Truman our former chairman. Les volunteered in the kitchen each Friday and ran our public collections in Victoria Station.

Although Christopher did not collect with us, the daily walk might be diverted through the station just to see how Les was getting on. Les passed away last year aged 90 but unfortunately it was after Christopher's operation and he was confined to barracks.

As Sub-Administrator Fr Christopher often gave wise but informal counsel to the Friends. I suspect, although he never said it, he might have preferred it to remain that way as Administrator. However as Canon Christopher took over from Monsignor Mark the change to our rules took effect and as Administrator he became Chairman. Christopher was a very loyal attendee at Friends' events, lending personal encouragement to all.

Under Canon Christopher's leadership the Friends funded a remarkable number of Cathedral projects. Grants were made towards the dome renovations, and the Treasury Room was refurbished, the new lavatories were built, costs relating to the Papal Mass and the commemorative inscription were funded, the mosaics of St George's Chapel were installed and the lighting improved, the Tower Viewing Gallery and its lift were renovated, the Song School furniture was replaced and the glass doors were installed inside the West Door, to mention only the larger projects.

Very occasionally the Council is divided. Fr Christopher was almost a referee between two teams when deciding which Cathedral projects to support to mark the 40th anniversary of the Friends. He bore the role with patience and good humour.

It does not seem that long since we marked Canon Christopher and Cardinal Vincent's 70th birthdays with a joint party in the Friary – generously hosted by Peter Sheppard and Keith Day. It is hard to think he has gone before reaching 75 and the much-anticipated enjoyment of a quiet retirement but no doubt, to enjoy his eternal reward. We will miss him.

ANDREW HOLLINGSWORTH

I HAVE worked for Canon Tuckwell as co-ordinator of the Cathedral's some 400 volunteers since he arrived at Westminster Cathedral in 2006 as Sub-Administrator. Over that time, we became good friends with occasional disagreements, as friends are wont to do. I shall miss him very much.

He maintained a close connection and warm relationship with all the volunteers and was always interested in knowing how they were progressing. I think I can safely say that he knew most of them by name, no mean feat, and one that I cannot always manage. The numerous messages of condolence and anecdotes sent by many volunteers since the sad news of his death on 26 June is evidence of this.

Fr Christopher continued and consolidated his predecessor's ambition to make the Cathedral into a parish community. He encouraged our different groups to participate fully in the life of the Cathedral and to take ownership of it. That they all did so with great enthusiasm is a tribute to him.

Fr Christopher thoroughly enjoyed social events, particularly the parish ones. He was in his element when we celebrated his 70th birthday some five years ago. The Cathedral Hall was bursting at the seams with well-wishers and of course he was always surrounded by people queueing to claim his attention. There was food (and drink!) aplenty that evening. At Christmas it was almost impossible to get into his office because of the quantity of presents. He was a faithful attendee at the teas in the Hall after the 10.30 Sunday Mass, moving from table to table to sit with different groups. He would notice any visitors and new parishioners and make a point of greeting them.

He made sure he was always available to celebrate the annual Mass for volunteers and attended the party in the Hall afterwards. He was a master at working the room and talking to everyone. No-one was left out. He had the special gift of saying just the right thing to make us all feel appreciated. Everyone felt loved and appreciated by him.

When he was walking through the Cathedral he was invariably mobbed by well-wishers in a sea of outstretched hands and smiling faces as he tried to move towards the door. They were like bees round a honeypot; all eager to have his attention.

I cannot leave out his stints as quizmaster at our regular Friends' quiz evenings. Many only attended because of him. When arguments arose, as they sometimes did, he made plain that the quizmaster's decision was final. Some former participants commented: 'We enjoyed his magisterial performance!' I think he would have liked that description.

We all prayed for his recovery from illness and were delighted to see him back in the Cathedral concelebrating at Mass. It seemed a good omen for the future. After Mass, he would stand at the Cathedral West Door warmly greeting parishioners. In latter days, he had to sit on the stone pillars, but he was always surrounded by an admiring throng. It is hard to grasp that his kindly, benevolent presence will no longer be seen in the Cathedral.

Fr Christopher's reach was wide. I think I have been on most of his pilgrimages and people came from across the country to join in; they used to check the website to see which pilgrimages he would be leading. He inspired us with his short but apposite

reflections at our daily Masses and the holy sites we visited. The pilgrimages were a great spiritual resource for those participating but they were also enormous fun. He was in his element leading pilgrimages. He was caring and spent a considerable amount of time being available to those who had suffered some misfortune, such as being mugged, or losing passports (not unusual). His earthly pilgrimages have now ended. He is safe in his heavenly home. May God rest you dear Fr Christopher.

MARY MAXWELL

DEAR CHRISTOPHER, I wanted to write to you, to say that everyone at The Passage has you in our thoughts and prayers.

I am so grateful for all you have done for The Passage, both as a Trustee (I know that was never your favourite activity!) and of course the role that you love; that of visiting The Passage on a Friday and spending time with our clients over lunch.

Please know how much of an impact those visits made. As St Vincent De Paul said: "You will go out and meet the poor ten times a day, and ten times a day you will see the face of Christ."

I know you experienced that for yourself on those visits, but I also know that those you encountered will have experienced the Church in a loving, meaningful and compassionate way via their interaction with you; that is a gift that we were so fortunate to have you share with us and them.

You remain in our thoughts and prayers, and you remain very much loved.

God Bless Christopher,

Fr Padraig

FR PADRAIG REGAN CM

Letter sent during Canon Christopher's final illness

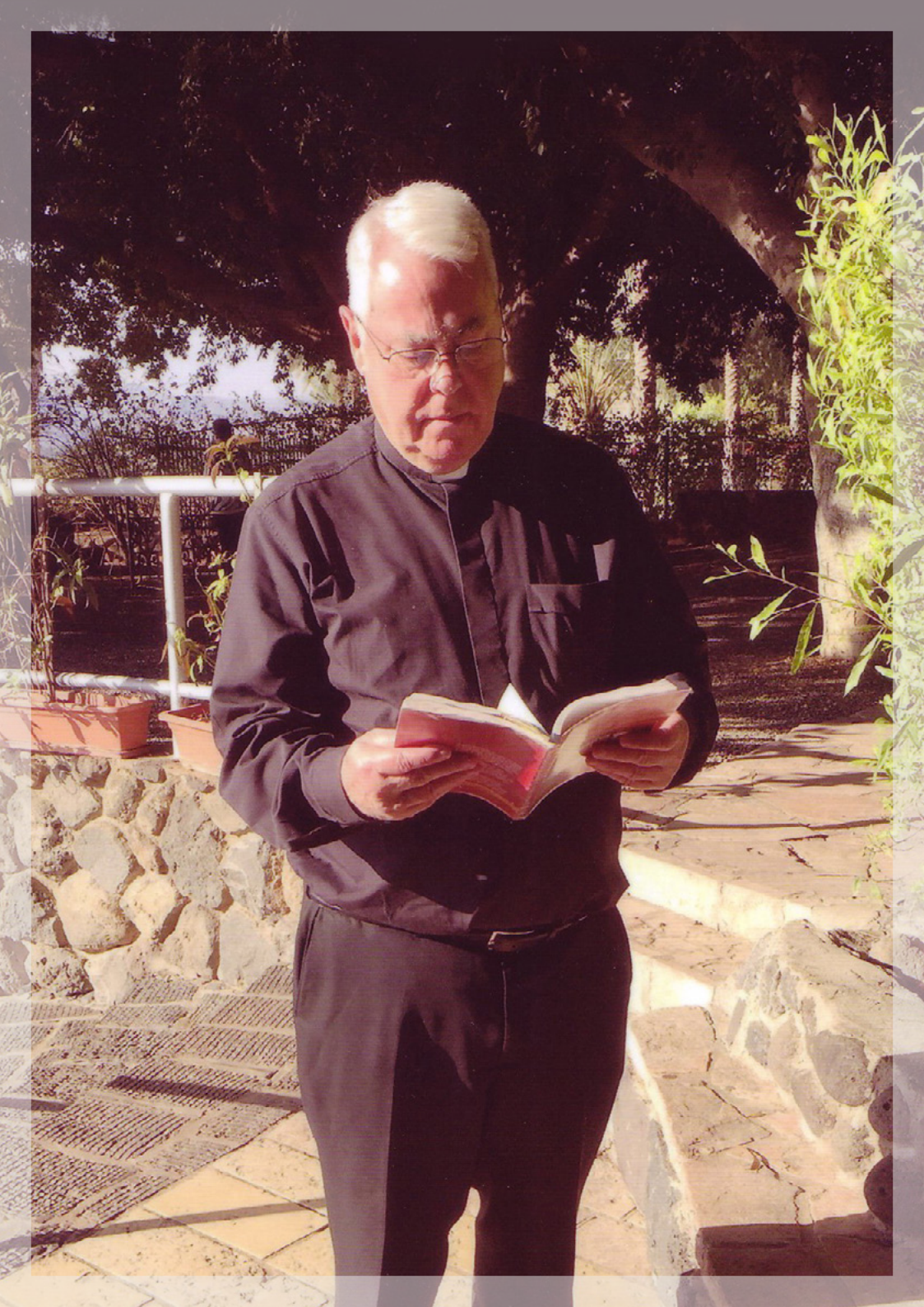
UNTIL CANON'S illness, he was ever faithful to his Friday lunchtime visits at The Passage. He only ever had soup and a roll. I loved him being there. As soon as he was spotted by the clients, he was in big demand at their tables.

One Friday, a client called me over to his table saying: "See the Padre over there, he's ACE; yes Mam, he's ACE!" The other three at the table were nodding their heads in agreement and I joined them. The poor always recognise 'Jesus' passing by.

We will miss him. May he rest in peace.

SR BERNIE GEARY DC

Tribute on hearing of Canon Christopher's death



MY FIRST encounter with Fr Christopher (as he was then) was when he was on my job interview panel in September 2006. I cannot recall what questions he asked or comments he made, but I reflected afterwards how the initial authoritative, somewhat gruff appearance he projected was quickly eclipsed by that velvet voice and the genial sparkle in the eye. I knew that were I to get the job that we would “get on”. I found out subsequently of course that Fr Christopher had only been appointed Sub-Administrator a short time, so we were novices together, as it were, and this fact helped create some kind of bond between us in the following years.

He was a man with great compassion and humanity, underneath that veneer of humour and bonhomie, which endeared him to all he engaged with. How often have we seen him outside the Great West Door in his vestments after a Sunday morning Mass engulfed in a cluster of parishioners with periodic peals of laughter erupting?

During my time working in the Cathedral, in the many encounters and meetings I had with him, some formal, others spontaneous, whatever the reason, I rarely left his office without a smile on my face and a spring in my step.

I recall entering his office some years back and music was playing; a tenor singing an Irish ballad. *I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen*, I think it was. The Canon challenged me to identify the singer: “Now, you should know who this is!” I knew it had to be either John McCormack or Josef Locke and because it lacked the signature crackles of McCormack recordings, I chose Locke. “You’re spot on,” he said, “not many people around these parts would know that.” And so, we spent the next ten minutes discussing Josef Locke’s songs, his chequered career and related matters. After which I had to think really hard to bring to mind the reason why I had come to his office in the first place. It was often thus.

And then there were the Clergy House Christmas lunches where before proceedings would break up, a sing-song would develop and I never did get around to finding out how Canon Christopher Tuckwell, an ex-officer in the British Army, had such a repertoire of Irish rebel songs.

He will be sorely missed.

JOHN DALY

*Oh! I will take you back, Kathleen
To where your heart will feel no pain
And when the fields are fresh and green
I'll take you to your home again...*

THE DAY before he was scheduled to have surgery, Canon Christopher sent an email to the staff and clergy of the Cathedral. The email spoke of updates and progress and was a measure of the positive and faithful way he approached his illness. Post-surgery, an enforced period of convalescence meant that he missed many of the Friends' events of 2019. Time and time again we found ourselves saying: 'Fr Christopher would have loved this.' I recall his insistence that he would accompany us to Wonersh and to Tudeley this spring. He was poorly, we knew it, but in indomitable fashion he grasped life and it seemed that his willpower alone would make it happen.

In March this year, I went to a lecture at Gresham College on Corpse Roads; the pathways, often ancient, taken by coffin bearers across the English countryside. Stalwarts of the Friends will know that I am usually on the lookout for people who might give a talk in the Cathedral and I told Fr Christopher about it. In the event, the lecture was a tad dry. I was hoping for something Hardy-esque and poetic: labourers in the twilight circuiting fields of corn to get to the churchyard, but instead it was all maps, diagrams, elevations and topography. I came away with the barest glimpse of an ancient time – the ledge in the lychgate, the stones on which a coffin would rest – and made a mental note to seek out some historic paths on the next Friends' outing. I picked up a printed copy of the lecture notes for Fr Christopher. If he couldn't come to the talk, the talk would come to him.

In the last newsletter, Fr Christopher wrote that he was looking forward to re-joining the Friends on trips. 'I was,' he admitted, 'a little envious of my fellow chaplains accompanying you to such interesting places.' The interesting places were, of course, often arranged at his behest. He was the inspiration, and many of the days out were fashioned to accommodate things that he wanted to see. We went to Sandhurst – his alma mater – and Chartwell, and there were innumerable visits to recusant houses where he often celebrated Mass, most memorably at Harvington Hall in the upper room, as priests had done in penal times. He said Mass too at the Anglican church of St Mary in Selborne. It was, the vicar wryly observed, the first Catholic Mass in the church since the Reformation.

I cannot explain why, but for some reason it is not in his beloved Cathedral where I visualise Fr Christopher best, but in the English countryside: walking in the faded rose gardens of Wellington's country house, reading the inscription on the gravestone of Copenhagen, the steed that carried the Iron Duke to victory; in the sunshine at Littlemore, in the footsteps of St John Henry Newman; at Mapledurham, on the banks of a gentler Thames than the river that flows through London.

One memory stands out, my favourite memory, of Fr Christopher at Silchester where, in the spirit of Marcus Flavius Aquila (the bronze eagle of the Ninth Legion was discovered here, the inspiration for Rosemary Sutcliffe's eponymous novel), he set off across a field of barley, a rag-tag band of Friends in pursuit, striding the ancient route of a Roman road.

In Virgil's Aeneid, Elysium – the destination for the blessed and the good – knows perpetual spring and shady groves, with its own sun and lit by its own stars: *solemque suum, sua sidera norunt*. I see Fr Christopher walking there, as at Silchester, the sun on his face and the wind at his back.

CHRISTINA WHITE



“Canon Christopher started every Friends’ meeting with a prayer to Our Lady of Westminster and to St John Southworth”

I SET great store by times and dates, and their aptness. It's not superstition, but I like to read in them the hand of divine providence. So it was, that when I learned that Canon Tuckwell died after first Vespers of the Solemnity of St John Southworth (a feast always begins the evening before), I felt a great sense of assuredness. Canon Tuckwell had been custodian of St John's mortal remains for some years. I could not help but feel that St John had therefore taken Fr Christopher's soul into his custody. A very 'Westminster Cathedral' sort of an end.

A few days after Canon Christopher's death, a colleague and I were reminiscing about him. In so many ways, we decided, the Canon was Westminster Cathedral. He epitomised all that was best about it. At times dignified, solemn, and rising to the most important occasions: the funeral of a cardinal; the visit of a pope; as well as many other state visits and important events. But also, the loving heart of the Cathedral.

In his last months, it was beautiful to see him spending hours sat in the nave of the church, and out in the piazza, talking to people, even if he was feeling distinctly suboptimal. There was an approachability to him. Anyone felt they could come and talk to him; just as anyone feels they are able to come into the Cathedral, in joy or sorrow. His assiduousness in prayer was also evident; it was always most edifying to see him at the back of the Lady Chapel, after the 5.30 Mass, joining in with the rosary.

Although I was appointed Head Sacristan after Fr Christopher had largely stepped back from public duties, he showed kindness to me in many small ways.

Shortly before Christmas 2018, I bumped into him outside Piccadilly Circus station, as he was on his way to undertake some Christmas shopping. It was shortly after my illustrious predecessor had announced his intention to retire. "Has someone spoken to you?" he asked. "That is, I hope someone has spoken to you about the sacristy at the Cathedral." Nothing more was said, but I was able to reassure him that, indeed, someone had spoken to me.

His kindness continued as I took post. "I hope we will be able to sit and have a talk at some point." Sadly, we never got that chance. But, as I started to discover things tucked away, he would notice when I brought different things out. "I'm very glad to see you using that," or, "I didn't know we had that!" He was always encouraging. One of the last things he said to me was thanking me for the hard work I'd put in for the 40 hours: the *Quarant' Ore*.

It was a great honour to be able to put together the vestments for his final journey: cassock, amice, alb, cincture, chasuble, and stole. And another small touch: a cappa parva: the proper dress of a Canon of our cathedral, which also traditionally rests, unfurled to its full extent, on the coffin of the deceased priest. A very 'Westminster Cathedral' sort of an end.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord. And let light perpetual shine upon him. Our Lady of Westminster and St John Southworth: Pray for him.



HOMILY

THE SCRIPTURE readings we have just heard, and the witness of the life of Canon Christopher Tuckwell, for whom we pray, invite us today to a renewal of our faith in Jesus. This faith underpinned Christopher's life and ministry, giving him the stability and compassion of which we heard in the lovely obituary, at the beginning of Mass. Christopher must have repeated so often the words of St Peter: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' and echoed those similar words of St Thomas: 'My Lord and my God'. His profession of faith, deep, personal, resolute, enduring, guided both the manner of his life and the manner of his dying.

Peter's profession of faith, in the narrative of St Matthew, has an important context. It takes place at Caesaria Philippi, a location northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Remote it might have been, but not insignificant. Its original name was Panias, after the Greek god of nature, Pan, for an ancient shrine to that pagan deity was located there. It was also the site of ancient Syrian temples, set aside for the worship of Baal. But most dramatically, Herod the Great had built a huge temple in Panias to the godhead of Caesar. Herod's son, Philip, had further embellished the marble temple and changed the name of the town to Caesaria, Caesar's town, adding his own too: Caesaria Philippi.

So it was before this huge monument to the Roman notion of the godhead, with its pagan ancestry, that Jesus posed the question: 'Who do you say that I am?' And Peter responds, in the face of the power of the place and the culture of his day: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

The question: 'Who do you say that I am?' echoes down through the ages and knocks on the door of our hearts, too. Christopher's answer was unequivocal. We pray that ours may be so, too, even as we stand in the context of so many prevailing options and contrary claims, both worldly and some even pagan.

I was blessed to be with Christopher the day before he died. Our conversation was simple: hello; goodbye; prayers and love. He said to me, in his direct and uncomplicated way: 'I am really looking forward to meeting my Lord.' As I left he gave a final salute, the wave of a raised arm, calm and reassuring.

The gift of such faith is priceless. We search for it; we reach out for it; we rejoice in it as the most precious gift of all. The words of Jesus, addressed to Peter, apply again today: 'Christopher, you are a happy man, because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.'

St Paul revels in the gift of faith: 'With God on our side, who can be against us? ... after such a gift ... he will not refuse anything he can give.' In Christopher, the gift gave rise to a quiet confidence and deep compassion.

Christopher carried that quiet confidence with him wherever he went: in his search for Catholic faith; in the world of the Army, latterly at the Wellington Barracks and with the Chelsea Pensioners; in his friendships and the good things they brought, and in his daily life of prayer.

He knew the assurance of St Paul, that 'nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

From the rich tapestry of his ministry, there is one thread I would like to highlight. It is easily overlooked but for me, it is a golden thread. Did you notice, in the account of his life, which we listened to, that at each stage of his ministry, Christopher put himself into the company of the poor and the needy? He had a freedom to give of himself without anxiety.

As an Anglican ordinand, he spent his holiday as a nursing orderly; in St Vincent's, he took on the extra role of a prison chaplain; he did also in Hemel Hempstead, at HMP The Mount; and the same in Clapton, spending time with the prisoners in HMP Pentonville. During his years here at the Cathedral, he was a regular and willing chaplain and visitor to The Passage, happily spending Friday lunchtimes with the guests, listening and chatting, always conveying an unconditional compassion to those most in need. He lived the teaching of St Vincent de Paul: 'You will go out and meet the poor ten times a day and ten times a day you will see the face of Christ' (quoted in a letter from The Passage to Christopher shortly before he died, a tribute to his presence there).

Today we know so clearly that this golden thread of his faith in action is a powerful and needed witness in our society to the truth and beauty of our faith. As the effects of this pandemic unfold like thunder above our heads, this response to the poor becomes more and more a priority for us: our capacity to turn our eyes to the vulnerable, to those on the margins, and bring to them a gaze of the compassion of Christ and practical assistance. I thank God for the quiet witness given by Christopher in this way and I hope that he will inspire in each of us a similar, undemonstrative determination that they are not forgotten.

This Cathedral became his home. The Administrator's stall - there - his place of prayer, even when it was a struggle to get there and painful to remain. He gave himself, heart and soul, to this House of God, which he loved.

Cardinal Hume once described this Cathedral in these words: 'Westminster Cathedral exists to help us search for God and to offer him worship. It is a house for all. It is a place where we meet Christ and, in and through him, gain strength and courage to take another step along the road to God.'

These words 'fit' Christopher so well. He made them his own in his ministry here. Today we pray that their affirmation finds fulfilment in him, too: that his journey to God, now ended in this world, is fulfilled through God's mercy and that Christopher now beholds his Lord, face to face.

Eternal rest give unto to him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen

HE CARDINAL VINCENT NICHOLS
Archbishop of Westminster

Given at the Funeral Mass of Canon Christopher Tuckwell at Westminster Cathedral on 7th July 2020

A YEAR'S MIND

IT IS common still in Ireland for the deceased to be remembered a month or even a year after their death with a Requiem and a wake. Historically, in rural isolated areas, it was sometimes not possible to get notice of a death to all friends and family.

There seemed to us to be a commonality between the isolation of rural areas that recommended a month's or a year's mind, with the isolation enforced by COVID-19 and so many of you wanted to be at Canon Christopher's Requiem.

The Friends have therefore arranged a Requiem Mass for 6.00pm on Saturday 26 June 2021. This will be followed by a wake in the Hall which will be free of charge for all Friends of the Cathedral. Further details will be confirmed next year, but please mark the date. In a year's time we hope the pandemic will have eased and we may gather in friendship to remember our pastor, our friend and our compatriot in heaven.

THE FRIENDS OF WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

REQUIEM MASS FOR CANON CHRISTOPHER TUCKWELL RIP
WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL AT 6PM ON SATURDAY 26 JUNE 2021
TO BE FOLLOWED BY A WAKE IN THE CATHEDRAL HALL

St Bede referred to the month's mind as commemorationis dies and according to the records these so-called minding days were of great antiquity, survivals of the Norse minne, or ceremonial drinking to the dead.

"Minnyng Days," according to Blount, "from the Saxon Lemynde, which our ancestors called their monthe's mind, their yeare's mind and the like, being the days whereon their souls (after their deaths) were had in special remembrance, and some office or obsequies said for them..."

Pictures:

Marcin Mazur, Br. Gildas Parry O.Praem, Weenson Oo, Fr Daniel Humphreys, Fr John Scott, Richard Hawker and Maria O'Brien.

Back page image: The late Canon Christopher Tuckwell's stall draped in the traditional cappa parva, worn until a few years ago by the Canons of the Cathedral Chapter, when a much simpler version was adopted. These items were worn looped up the back of the wearer and only untied to ceremoniously drape over a Canon's coffin.

Thank you to the Head Sacristan, Mr Richard Hawke, for his touching display.



the friends
OF WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL