

**Father Patrick Tuft, 5th November 1931 - 5th July 2023, vicar of St Nicholas, Chiswick Parish Church, from 1974 - 2006.**

**His funeral was held at St Mary's Church, Bourne Street, SW1, on 21st July 2023 at 11.30am.**

**Eulogies were given by Christabel Ames-Lewis and Nigel Woolner; the homily was preached by Monsignor Jim Curry.**

Through my mind flow so many memories of Patrick, from the first glimpse of him processing into St Nicholas, Chiswick Parish Church, and seeing his fine sideburns, to the huge change in atmosphere as the family, bursting with boys, settled into the new vicarage, and the end of the age of paternalism. For Patrick did not command, he recognised women as equals, and was clearly a learner as a parish priest.

What I remember is that Patrick knew how to wait, how to leave space for others to take action, how to concentrate on what was important in his mind and not try to do everything in the parish himself. Very irritating sometimes of course for us! He made some mad decisions, one being asking me to be Vicar's Warden when the three children I had at the time were five and under. I hadn't a clue what was required of me, and nor had Patrick, in spite of the instruction I had from my predecessor Stanley Collingwood who had been in the role for a quarter of a century. When in desperation I asked Patrick what was his blue print for the parish he said I couldn't ask that question; I would see the answer in ten years' time. And so it proved.

As the years went by the congregation gradually learnt to take responsibility for the way St Nicholas was run; there was a much more open welcome to all who came through the church door, and people of all sorts, conditions and politics found it was a place to come, rest, think and enquire, without pressure to sign up on a dotted line of belief. I think the congregation grew up during his ministry; he gave us the opportunity to do so.

Patrick's unwavering focus was on the liturgy, the way it was conducted, the beauty of worship. He taught us deep reverence and seriousness in the conduct of worship. We learnt much from him, often without realising it.

There are so many particular memories of his ministry: his focus on Ecumenism, his response to Silent Prayer sessions, his teaching, which one year included a class for O Level Religious Studies for a small group run with a member of the congregation. There were his sermons, never written out in full but looking like vertical maps on the A4 page, a pattern of notes, stories and jokes; and his appreciation of other preachers, notably the sermons of Martin Daly our Reader. I think of the experience he gave through the years to his wide range of curates, affording each the space to develop his own ministry. Then there was his enjoyment of the unusual, the eccentric and the unexpected in people, and the support he gave to individual initiative, as to Jane Watson when she started delving into the archives still kept at the church

I came to see that most of all Patrick was a person of understanding and humility, knowing when he was really needed, never forcing himself into a situation but having compassion

along with a realistic acceptance of people, life and death. When our fourth child, Marcus, died suddenly aged 19, Patrick came straight round to us, said nothing, but put his arms round me. No words would have done as much to help.

His enduring message to us all at the heart of his ministry? Trust and be reconciled.

Thank you, Patrick.

**At Fr Patrick Tuft's funeral his friend Nigel Woolner gave one of the eulogies.**

**This is a write-up of his notes.**

Nigel Woolner said he was honoured to be asked by Pauline Tuft to speak about the secular, social aspect of Patrick who had been his friend for 49 years. When the Tufts arrived in Chiswick, Nigel and his wife Carol were introduced to Patrick and Pauline by mutual friends. They at once asked Patrick to christen their first son Alex, and later to do the same for their second and third children. Nigel remembered asking Patrick as the father of five sons what advice he would give on bringing up children. His answer: make your views clear to them from the start; other than that, be friends with them. Great advice, which he had followed.

He and Patrick shared a passion for Venice and its architecture. Both had copies of the 1966 edition of

J R Links' book 'Venice for Pleasure', full of information on you what to see, what not to waste time on, local bars and restaurants, special food treats, unexpected detours. Patrick had always been supportive and interested in Nigel's watercolour paintings made there. When Donna Leon published 'Death at La Fenice' they both read it and went on to read all 32 in the series ! Patrick had a delight in small, Venice souvenirs – vaporetto tickets, old postcards, book marks, tacky model gondolas ! The passion for Venice was one they shared – for light and water married to stone, for the combination of life and decay. Nigel was always sad that they never visited the city together.

Another aspect of Patrick was his enjoyment of British Clubs. In Boswell's words about Dr Johnson, Patrick was a very 'clubbable man'. He adored the Athenaeum, its Decimus Burton splendour, what Kipling described as 'a cathedral to visit between services'. He was at home in the magnificent library and advised on what books to let go due to lack of space, particularly in the theology section. Every year, taking it in turns, Nigel and Patrick would host each other for lunch at the Athenaeum and Garrick. These were long lunches, with great conversations, ending with coffee in the drawing room well after 4pm. Patrick had effective advice for his fellow members considering the applications of would-be members when the request came from someone they were uncertain about: 'It's early days, hmmm', a subtle strategy for deflecting a problem. Patrick was a wonderfully clubbable man and a delightful dining companion.

Another shared passion was for music, especially for Mozart and his operas – Figaro, Così Fan Tutte and Don Giovanni. Nigel recalled Christmas evenings when after a wonderful dinner cooked by Pauline, Patrick would sit down at the grand piano, once owned by George Macaulay Trevillion, Master of Trinity, Cambridge, and play extracts from these operas. Of the three, Figaro encapsulated life for Patrick, with its characters ranging from the Countess, to the servants, Figaro and Suzanna, and the peasant gardener Antonio complaining bitterly in his speaking role about a broken flower pot and ruined carnations. All is resolved in Act 4 'in giardino', in the garden, a phrase which became Patrick and Nigel's greeting for many years. The greatest of their operatic evenings was on 27 June 2010 when Patrick and Pauline, Nigel and Carol went to Figaro at Garsington. It was a wonderful summer's evening, the gardens looking beautiful, the dinner superb and the production perfect. There will be no Patrick on such evenings in the future.

Patrick understood the importance of retiring, stepping down, to make way for the new generation. He could have stayed on at St Nicholas but wisely he stood aside as vicar when he reached 75, in 2006. The prospect of downsizing didn't phase him, despite the vast number of his books ! Thanks to the help of architect Gill Wilson and the Tuft family the move to Worple Road was accomplished. Patrick loved Isleworth and he and Pauline made a new life there. Alas, the grand piano had to go but Patrick continued to enjoy playing on a small keyboard, a gift from St Nicholas Church.

Nigel said that everyone would have so many particular memories of a wonderful man, who made a difference to our lives. He hoped he had found his new 'giardino' where, as at the end of Figaro, beauty, peace, compassion and forgiveness reign. These were the heartfelt values of dear Patrick himself.