



SUNDAY, 26 JULY 2015

REFLECTION: CHERISHING LIFE, ACCEPTING DEATH

Throughout his life Dave was an active member of his local church, their caravan club and the Scouts. Supported by his family and by his friends he died last year after a long and disfiguring struggle with mouth cancer.

He was one of those remarkable people who, through their lives, teach us about the power and depth of God's love. He was not afraid of death: he had a gift of faith such that he saw clearly that God had loved and chosen him and had prepared a place for him in heaven. As much as he desired to be with the Lord, he loved and cherished every day that was given to him to be with his family and friends and to continue to help others through his voluntary work in the church and the Scouts.

Dave and his family showed remarkable courage in the way he faced his illness. He reminds me that to be a disciple is called to accept the paradox of loving life and accepting death. During his illness he had to face difficult decisions about whether or not to accept various treatments and finally, when they could sustain him no longer to prepare for his death. His example reminds me that Jesus walks with us in illness and that whatever the circumstances we are called to pray and place our trust in God. Sometimes this is difficult and God seems very distant. Faith is about holding on in the darkness. Although the journey may be stormy, we can hope in the promise of God that he waits to welcome us into the joy of heaven.

Those people who cherish life and accept death in their final weeks or months on earth have a special place in God's plan and in communicating his love to us. As our brothers and sisters in need they call us to a ministry of compassion and friendship in their suffering. Through our presence the compassionate God is revealed to them and our faith and hope are strengthened by their witness. Through their presence among us, through their faith and hope, God draws our attention to the great blessing of the life to come. Their example offers us hope as they look forward to the resurrection whilst living through the cross.

Fr Jonathan How
Director of Studies
St John's Seminary, Womersley