



RITUAL AND REMEMBRANCE

Funeral of murdered 21-year-old girl (a drug user and working latterly as a prostitute)

I know these have been long weeks, long, traumatic weeks, for and everyone who's loved Claire and cared about her, weeks in which it's even been hard to grieve properly in the midst of all the anger and anguish and hurt that have been piled on top of the grief.

But we've reached one important point today when we have the chance, at last, to lay Claire to rest, and to do this with all the love and sympathy and compassion and understanding, that everyone here has felt for Claire over the years.

With love and affection, respect and dignity, we can place Claire into God's hands now, and hear God assure us all of the rest and the peace which is his gift.

And this is the one remaining thing we can do for Claire now.

We can't change what has happened, or change the past in any way. But we can remember Claire with kindness, we can thank God for what she has meant to us, and we can ask God to welcome her, with love and compassion and mercy, into the true peace and real happiness of heaven.

Prayer

God in heaven, despite our shock and our pain, we're grateful for the gift of love, which binds us together, sometimes in happiness, sometimes in grief.

With Claire we have shared this love, shared its commitment and companionship, shared its care and concern, shared its ups and its downs, its pains and its anguish. With Claire and with each other we have lived and loved and made friends.

When friendship has been strained love has re-opened the old path of affection. When darkness has engulfed us, love has kept our memories alive and shown us the way forward.

And what we need today is the reassurance that our love and concern and care, have been worthwhile, that all our loving lives forever in the eternity of your Kingdom, and that your love for Claire and ourselves is undiminished.

What we need today is your strength so that sorrow and hurt do not crush our spirits, so that our best memories of Claire bring with them deep gratitude for her company and character and friendship.

What we need today is the reassurance that there is nothing that can separate any one of us from the great love of Christ in which Claire now rests, no trouble, no worry, no danger, no fear.

What we need today is the deep conviction that death cannot destroy what we've shared with Claire, and given to her, the deep conviction that nothing can come between us and you, our God, the God who loves us and welcomes us, no matter who we are, or what has happened to us.

So give us strength and hope, Lord, because we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, Amen.

Tribute

In another place in the Bible, we're told that there are only three things that last forever: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these by far, he says, is love.

And this is good news, because God, in his mercy and compassion, will not allow violence or injustice, gossip or lies, or pain or grief or anguish, to last forever.

Instead only the love we've felt, and the love we've shown, and the love that others have had for us - only this love will last forever.

And this allows us to hold on to our good memories of who Claire has been for us, our good memories of the love that's been shared with her as a daughter and relative and friend, and the love she's felt and shown to those who've loved her and cared about her over the years, and, of course, the great love and care she's shown as a mother to wee

We're bound to feel angry at what's happened now, and that's not wrong, and it's right and proper that we should pray for justice today.

But we can still thank God for Claire, for all the energy and all the living, all the character and personality, she packed into her short 21 years, years in which(details of Claire's life)

The love that is in our hearts today will, God has promised us, last forever, just as God's own love lasts forever, the love God has for Claire and ourselves, the love that will never let any of us go.

Prayer

Our God, you made us, you love us, you watch us, you keep us. In loving each other we find the meaning of our lives. In your love for us we find our home. So we thank you for loving Claire during her life, and we thank you for the life and the love that were in her, and for the friendship she shared with others.

We thank you too for your promise that we and those we love will share in your resurrection, that there is a place for us all in your Kingdom, that Claire goes before us, as Jesus went to prepare a place for her, and we will one day be reunited, in your time and by your grace.

God of heaven and earth, let our hearts be calm and still now with the knowledge that your love for us all, living and dead, is very real. From our love and from your goodness bring justice for Claire and for ourselves, and in that justice let us all find peace.

So lead us beyond our tears to new strength and new determination, so that we can live in the light and not in the shadows, so that we can see the light of your love for us shining clearly in our daily living.

Set our troubled hearts at rest, and let Claire rest in your peace with that calm of soul and spirit that is your salvation. Give us a sense of peace with the past and don't let us worry about the future, and bless us all with the gift of eternal life, which we find in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

Benedictions

Now may the guarding of the God of life be on you,
the guarding of the loving Christ be on you,
the guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you,
to help you and surround you,
every day and every night of your lives,
with the blessing of the God who loves us, Amen.

Lord, be our peace now,
our hope, our light, our life and our joy,
as we find you in our midst,
and feel you in our hearts,
and know with the confidence you give us,
that you rose from the dead to raise us up with you,
and give to us the unbelievable blessing of eternal life,
in which we now rejoice, Amen.

And now may the good grace of Jesus our Saviour,
the sympathetic love of God,
and the warm presence of the Holy Spirit be with you all,
today and in the days ahead, Amen.