

Homily – a Service of Thanksgiving for Simon Tennant – Friday 11th December 2020

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There is a theme of love running through our service this afternoon, from the opening song Nights in white satin, through your tributes and the piece of scripture that we have just heard.

Love has been apparent in all the Whatsapp posts, messages that spoke of not only loss, but of love, people's love for Simon and testimonies to the love that he shared with everyone.

I haven't been here very long, so I didn't know Simon as well as many of you, but his sense of humour and his gentle spirit were clear to see. In our council meetings he was often quiet but when he chose to speak, we all listened because we knew there was going to be great wisdom behind those words!

Pascale and I talked on Tuesday about Simon's faith. Pascale said that Simon just believed, there was no great conversion experience. He just had faith. I'm always very envious of people who have a faith like that, it's pure, it's uncomplicated and I believe it flows from God's spirit alive within us.

Another thing I know about Simon is that he hated to be late, You may not know this but there is a story in the bible about Jesus being late, late for a funeral ! Four days late in fact, for the funeral of his friend Lazarus. Lazarus's family waited for Jesus, because they wanted him to say something meaningful, something comforting, If anyone would have just the right words to say to take away the pain, bring comfort, then surely, it would be Jesus. When he finally arrives, the man's sister, Martha approaches Jesus and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died"

There is pain in her words, She is pleading with Jesus and saying "I don't understand. Help me make sense of this one, Jesus. Why weren't you here? Why did he have to die?"

At every funeral, we all become like that man's sister, we want the answers to all the difficult questions.

Jesus answers the woman by reminding her that her brother would live again. But Martha is not satisfied with these words, and says, "Oh, I know that he will rise on the last day ... but that doesn't help me, not here, right now.

I want him alive. And you weren't here.

Jesus speaks, but only to say one thing "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying" Then he turns to her and says simply "Do you believe this, Martha?"

For those of us who loved Simon there will be so many words spoken today. Few will take away the pain, the loss and grief that we feel.

What I would like to say that in the midst of that pain is that Jesus' words to Martha, and to us, offer hope today. No matter how large or small the seed of faith is that is beating within our hearts, we too can answer yes, even a faint yes, no matter, He still hears.

We know that Martha was not like her sister Mary, Mary was considered the religious one, whereas Martha often struggled. The words that Jesus spoke and her grief were a turning point for her, words that caused her to pause and consider how she would answer.

Funerals are a time for us to reflect, to pause to re evaluate our lives, they reminds us of how very thin the thread is that holds us between life and death. We know that none of us will last forever..

The bible, however, tells us of three things which will last forever, Faith, Hope and Love and the greatest of these is love.

And it is into that love that we commit Simon today. And it is that same love that we hope and pray will sustain and bring comfort to everyone, who will miss him so dearly today and in the days to come.

Amen