

Beaumont Lauder Brandie *priest*
6th June 2020

How very Beau - to have left instructions that *Ecce sacerdos magnus* should be played at his cremation service. *Ecce sacerdos magnus* - behold a great priest - sung as an anthem as the bishop is received into church at the beginning of a great celebration; played today as we gather round a priest we have seen, looked to, and loved for many years.

How very Beau to have wanted this music to be played - Elgar's setting, a little more restrained than Bruckner's, but still a piece that suggests a solemn occasion, and a piece that suggests movement - both aspects of why we are here today: a solemn occasion, of course, for we are here to bid our earthy farewells to him; and one in which, as we commend him to God, we are aware of movement - his movement from this world to the next.

Those first words of the anthem - *Ecce sacerdos magnus* - behold a great priest - point us to aspects of the life we have shared, that we remember, and for which we give thanks.

Ecce - behold, look, see. Fr Beau has had an influence on all of our lives: we've all become used to him being there, to seeing him. But today I'm reminded of a very poignant verse in the Acts of the Apostles: when St Paul was taking leave of Christians at Ephesus we read that what saddened them most was his saying they would never see his face again - we too will never see again the face we have looked upon so often, and like the Ephesian Christians we are saddened.

But *Ecce* - behold, look, see - that was Beau's instruction to so many people, on so many occasions, in so many different situations. See the logic of what I am saying; see the persuasiveness of my argument; see what is meant by a particular passage of scripture; see where the Church I love is going astray. But most of all *See Jesus* See Jesus in the Mass; see Jesus enthroned on the altar at Benediction; see Jesus as he said you must in the poor, the sick, the hungry, the needy. As we remember one who has been before our eyes in so many ways, we give thanks that, again in so many ways, he has pointed us to Jesus. And we pray that the Lord to whom he pointed us will reveal himself to Beau in all his glory when he welcomes him to the reward of faith.

Ecce - behold. Then the 2nd word *sacerdos* - priest. Beau exercised priestly ministry for 53½ years. He believed from an early age that priesthood was his vocation; he delighted in, and at the same time was humbled by, the privilege of priesthood. He taught those of us who were his curates the joys, sorrows, frustrations, fulfilment and so much more about priestly ministry. In the sacramental and teaching ministry he exercised he offered guidance, comfort, strength, consolation, and (as he reminded me on more than one occasion!) correction. In all of that he gave of himself unstintingly. How seriously he took the words of Jesus we have heard in the Gospel passage: *If a man serves me, he must follow me* We give thanks for Beau's faithful following of his Lord, and pray that he will know the fulfilment of the promise Jesus makes in those Gospel words that those who do follow him will be honoured by his Father. 53½ years of priestly ministry, 53½ years - I make that almost exactly of his life. And as that life drew to its end not only did he bear the pain, limitation, frustration of progressive illness, but also, and even more painfully, the letting go of the things that had been fundamental for of his life: the priestly discipline of the daily office, the privilege of saying Mass, the guiding and teaching and ministering to people entrusted to his care.

Ecce sacerdos - and the 3rd word, *magnus* - great. In many ways, a larger than life character, one of those people you couldn't forget was there, be it at a meeting, in church, at a social

function. In control; usually right (though he could concede that very occasionally he was wrong); outspoken (can we forget his contributions at Diocesan Synod meetings?); a great champion of the Catholic cause, at parish, diocesan and national level; a great influence on the lives of many, probably all, of us. But again, how hard for him that in illness he shrank - physically, that is, though the same spirit burned brightly almost to his last breath.

So much to be thankful for, personally and more widely in the Church. The prophet Isaiah's vision of the messianic banquet, the first reading today, seemed particularly appropriate: the banquet of rich food and fine wines (we all know that for Beau the earthly banquet always held a great appeal); but how often he spoke about and looked forward to the heavenly banquet, in the place where - because says the prophet Death has been destroyed for ever - all sorrow and pain is ended.

Ecce sacerdos magnus - behold a great priest; but the sentence goes on 'who in his days pleased God'. To please God is what we all must try to do; must try to do, but at the same time must acknowledge that in many ways we fail. As we give thanks for Beau today we pray for him, that the God whom he tried to please will forgive the times he failed, and that cleansed from sin he will be welcomed to the glorious presence of the Lord he has served so well.

Lord have mercy - that is our prayer now for him as we listen to the Kyrie from Duruflé's Requiem.