

In Thanksgiving for Fr. Deacon John-Mark (Titternngton)

"Memory Eternal!"



The following memories and thanksgivings are offered in celebration of the life of our dear brother and friend.

From the Family



John or Uncle Jack, as we called him, was very much a part of our family life and the cycle of stories and traditions that families create. He was our mother's cousin and like her an only child, so they had a relationship more like a brother and sister. This was certainly the role that John adopted after Dad's sudden death. John was her constant companion and a source of great support.

When we were young we saw him as a man of great kindness but also of considerable character that at times verged on eccentricity. One abiding memory is of his love of steam engines and railways in general. One of my strongest memories as a little boy is of being taken with one of my friends by Uncle Jack to an ancient and mouldering railway siding in Manchester. He had arranged for us to be taken in the cab of a steam train by an engine driver friend of his on one of the train journeys. The memory of that cold winter morning helping to stoke the boiler, which was also used for cooking breakfast and making tea is still vivid. It brought home also the things about John, his love for life, his kindness and perhaps most of all his ability to make friends with all he met. My mother kept a collection of letters

they had exchanged through the years and John wrote very funny satirical letters particularly when he was in the army, which he recounted in a very clear manner rather reminiscent of a more subtle version of Spike Milligan's war memoirs.

His sense of faith and adventure were probably brought home most clearly to Liz and I when he went to be a missionary in Papua New Guinea. His exploits have acquired legendary status in the family. The strength and character and sense of mission to embark on such an adventure at his time of life and after the tragically early death of Denise recalled the heights to which the human spirit can rise.

However, for us it was his kindness to ourselves and our children, Esther, Gregory, Marcus and Gaius that we will miss him.

"Anglican Days" by Marina Moss



Fr. John was made Deacon in the Church of England in Manchester Cathedral on Trinity Sunday 1951 and ordained Priest the following year. He served his first Curacy at St. Peter's West Leigh. Early in 1955 he moved to become Senior Curate at All Saints' Newton Heath, under the Rev'd G.R. Fooks. A year later in February 1956 he was inducted as Rector of All Saints', becoming the ninth Rector of the Church which began as a medieval chapel of ease to "t'owd Church" i.e. Manchester Cathedral now.

The Rev'd. Fooks had begun re-vitalising the Church and Fr. John continued this, overseeing the modernization of the building. He instituted a very efficient stewardship scheme which, besides putting the Church on a sound financial footing, had the effect of increasing the congregation to a point that on some Easter Sundays one had to be early to get a seat! During his time there the old Victorian rectory was replaced and a new Church Day School built in its place. All Saints' was always well-served by assistant curates because Fr. John was an excellent clergy trainer.

All the above are facts - they do not tell what a much-loved Priest he was. All Saints' people (past & present) remember him for his deep spiritual faith, his great caring and also his sense of humour (he had an infectious laugh which brought a smile to the faces of all within hearing distance!)

To the dismay of All Saints', in 1968, the Bishop decided that Fr. John should not serve all his ministry in one parish and persuaded him to agree to a move. Consequently on Friday, 15th November 1968, Fr. John was inducted as Vicar of All Saints and Martyrs, Langley in Middleton. In contrast to the ancient parish he was leaving, All Saints and Martyrs was a very new and modern Church and Parish. The Church was consecrated on All Saints' Day in 1964.

Fr. John's next move was to the ancient parish of St. Nicholas, Newchurch in Rossendale, the most northern part of Manchester Diocese, where he was also the Rural Dean. It was while he was serving there that he was Installed as an Honorary Canon of Manchester Cathedral. Tragically it was also there that his beloved wife, Denise, died. With the death of his wife, Fr. John decided to fulfil a long time wish. While serving his first curacy he was offered the chance to work in Papua - New Guinea; but as Denise was understandably not keen, it did not happen. However, being accepted now by the Church there, he resigned his living in Newchurch and in 1981 moved on to a ministry in Papua New Guinea.

Fr. John's first post in Papua New Guinea was as Lecturer at the Newton Theological College in Popondetta on the east coast of the country. The college consisted of a number of wooden buildings in the middle of the jungle. These housed the classrooms, staff and students with their families. Their one luxury being a mini-bus which provided much-prized trips into the town. While Fr. John was there the primitive outdoor chapel was replaced.

Having mastered Pidgin, Fr. John moved over the Owen Stanley Range of Mountains to the west coast to be the Priest of St. Mary the Virgin Parish in Gerehu. Here again he was responsible for the building of a new permanent church building to replace the old thatch roof supported by a few tree trunks.

Fr. John finished his service in Papua New Guinea as Dean of St. John's Cathedral in the capital, Port Moresby where he was also Vicar General. He returned home on his retirement in 1992.

"To Papua New Guinea" by +Bishop Paul Richardson



As Fr John reminded me when I visited him a couple of weeks before his death, we first met in a coffee bar on Preston station in December 1980. I had just been appointed Principal of Newton College and Fr John had offered to join the staff. I interviewed him and quickly offered him a job. By then he was already an experienced parish priest and an honorary canon of Manchester Cathedral who had been a member of General Synod. I was

33 and nervous about taking over as head of a theological college. Throughout the four years Fr John served with me at Newton College – where he was known as Fr Jack – he proved to be a loyal and capable colleague, an excellent teacher of liturgy and pastoral studies, and a prayerful priest who won the affection of his students.

After his time at Newton College, Fr John moved to Port Moresby to be rector of St Mary's, Gerehu, where Bishop David Hand was a parishioner in his retirement. Gerehu was a new parish in the suburbs of Port Moresby where Fr Peter, later Bishop Peter, Fox had been the first priest. Fr John consolidated the work that had been started and raised money to build a permanent church building. We were again colleagues when I moved to Port Moresby as Dean of St John's Cathedral, in 1986. I left St John's in 1987 to move to the Diocese of Aipo Rongo. Some years' later, Fr John moved to St John's, his last post before he left PNG after just over 11 years of service. He was a wonderful priest, much loved by the people in all the three posts he held in PNG.

"Good and Faithful Servant" by Fr. Gregory



Matthew 25:21 (New King James Version)

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"

Words cannot express just how much I shall miss Fr. John-Mark and I know that will be deeply felt by all of us here today at his Funeral Liturgy. To have worked so closely with such a man for 12 years in parochial ministry, a man I considered a true friend as well as co-worker, is to be forever changed ... for the better. He brought a deep stability to my life and that wide and generous perspective which I know was at the heart of his strongly held Christian faith. He was my senior in every respect and I shall always remember him as my rock.

Of course Father didn't see it that way. He was entirely without self regard. He was a labourer in the Lord's Vineyard and you just "get on with it." Quite so! He treasured his calling throughout his life and latterly as an Orthodox (permanent) deacon. His preaching

was at once sober and inspiring, thoroughly biblical and patristic, yet at the same time properly immersed in day to day Christian living.

For him the Orthodox Catholic faith was just so demonstrably true and he let it weather and shape his personal life and service accordingly. He could, for example, speak very frankly and naturally about what some outside the Church might consider "difficult" subjects. Confession for example — "I am off for a 'hose-down' this Saturday Father." Never one to conceal strong dislikes, he loathed meetings, synods and councils and attended them only very reluctantly. Perhaps he was like my patron saint, the Cappadocian father, St. Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzen) who lamented thus about such meetings:-

"I will not sit," he said, "in the seat of synods, while geese and cranes confusedly wrangle."

Pastorally he was the soul of discretion but could offer a timely hint when one was needed. *"Just have a word with so-and-so Father. It might be useful"...* and so it invariably was.

His care for all things spiritual *and* practical manifested itself in other curious but engaging ways. He was always *indexing* and *tagging* things, or so it seemed to us. Gospel readings, biblical quotes, snippets about this and that inserted in his books, a vast archive of memorabilia and a treasure trove of his meticulous heart and mind ... not given to fussiness but the true observer and collector of all things good and useful. Doubtless I shall still be using his lists in the altar for years to come!

Of course Fr. John-Mark spread himself abroad a bit as well. It was his delight to go with a small parish party regularly to Cyprus. Although failing health made this difficult in his final years his wanderings across that Christian country infused his faith with excitement about this very early Christian missionary outpost in the apostolic Church.

This is how I want to conclude this personal memory of my dear friend, Fr. Deacon John-Mark ... his quiet but strong and infectious enthusiasm concerning the things of God and the power of our Easter faith to renew the world. He was *never* an elderly man for me. He always had that the youthful vigour of a child of God and a servant of the Lord ... a life forever new, not only unvanquished by death but vanquishing death. Such a life can only be characterised by a deep abiding joy in Christ.

"Good and faithful servant Enter into the joy of Your Lord!" indeed!

"My Christian Journey" - Fr. John-Mark in his own words



John Milne Titterington was born in Salford, Lancashire on 28 April 1923 of committed Anglican parents and baptised at the Church where they had been married, All Saints, Newton Heath, where he subsequently became Rector. After a Roman Catholic High School and an Anglican minor seminary, four years in the Armed Forces were followed by two years "quick-fix" theological degree and two years "formation" in an Anglican theological college. Here the first seeds of Orthodoxy were sown by James H. Srawley DD, a former Chancellor of Lincoln whose lectures quoted the Fathers of the Church as extensively as the other staff quoted the Scriptures.

Marriage in 1950 precede ordination in the Diocese of Manchester and prefaced a ministry spread over 30 years in that urban diocese. During this time there grew an awareness that on many contentious issues the Eastern Churches were right and the Western Churches wrong. These included seeing:-

1. Baptism and Chrismation together as a better starting point for the Christian life than Baptism followed by Confirmation some years later;
2. a worthy celebration of the Divine Liturgy once per week in parish practice as nearer Christ's intention than a "slick" daily Mass;
3. that the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints generally achieve their proper place in life and worship;
4. marriage for the parochial clergy and celibacy for the bishops as solving many problems;
5. a true collegiality resolving the dilemma of who speaks for the Church;
6. above all else, that a bookish knowledge about God, so common in the West, could not compete with an experiential intimacy with Him nurtured over the years in Orthodoxy.

The increasing liberalisation of the Anglican Church during these years ... the last six spent as a member of their General Synod ... and the death in 1979 of a beloved spouse all helped to prepare the way for a change. The first approach to the Orthodox Church in 1980 was

met with a rebuff ... *"go away, laddie, and learn some more Greek."* No opportunity to do this was forthcoming and instead there was the re-awakening of an earlier call to overseas.

Eleven years followed in Papua New Guinea; a new country devoid of the two interests in life ... Orthodoxy and railways ... but richly rewarding in helping a small but vibrant Anglican Church to establish itself. Four years' teaching in the only Anglican seminary led this member of the staff to concentrate more and more on the basics of the Faith, the Tradition and the Bible, whilst being chaplain to an indigenous community of nuns helped him to see clearly the point of our faith, not as a religion but as a way of life established by Jesus Christ and intended to be lived by sharing the joy, love and peace of God with others.

Returning home in 1992 to an even more divided Anglican Church produced disillusionment as well as deep sorrow. The blinding light of a Damascus Road experience came on 10 July 1993 while reading an article in THE TABLET which described the attempts to set in place an English speaking Orthodox Church under an umbrella calling itself "Pilgrimage to Orthodoxy." This was IT and the rest is history.

Slowly but surely, with much help at first from the American part of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, Pilgrimage to Orthodoxy settled down to ten* widely spread communities under the care of the Patriarch in Damascus, (His Beatitude, Ignatios IV), the Vicar-Bishop in Paris, (His Grace, Bishop Gabriel), and the Dean in Sussex, (Fr Michael Harper). The eagerly awaited Chrismation as John-Mark came on Palm Sunday 1995 alongside 20 others and this led to a gradual building up of the Church of Saint Aidan in South Manchester under the dedicated leadership of Fr Gregory Hallam. At last, this restless soul had found its true home on its earthly pilgrimage.

But, retirement seems unknown to Orthodoxy! ... or maybe as one friend succinctly put it, *"there's no rest for the wicked."* All this led to 14 February 1998 when Bishop Gabriel laid on hands and ordained him to the permanent diaconate. And so, in the evening of life, a renewed ministry:- (contd) [* now 17]

1. serving the tables of the Eucharist and the poor
2. trying to guide the faithful in prayer with the deacon's frequent call: *"Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord."*
3. most important of all ... proclaiming the Gospel of Christ and that, hopefully, not just in the Liturgy.

A deacon has been described as a sort of ecclesiastical train spotter. The ancient description is more accurate: *"servus servorum Dei,"* ... the slave of the servants of God.

Thanks be to God for His mercies and His love in making all this possible.

Indeed Fr. John-Mark. Thanks be to God for your lifelong faithfulness to this vision and call. Amen!

Memory Eternal!