

**Funeral service for The Revd Canon Brian Mayne**  
**Down Cathedral**  
**Sunday 23 December 2012 at 2.15pm**

**Sermon by The Rt Revd Harold Miller,**  
**Bishop of Down and Dromore**

What a privilege it is to preach at Canon Brian Mayne's funeral service, as we stand alongside Valerie, Barbara, Hilary and Elizabeth in their loss of a beloved husband, father and brother.

Brian Mayne left very little to chance about this his final liturgy. There are some people to whom you sensitively say: 'Have you thought about what you would like at your funeral service?' Brian was not one. He told me that he had it planned and organized, even to the extent that, if he died in Downpatrick, it would be in Down Cathedral, but, if he died in Belfast, it would be in St John's Malone (and I believe that his memorial service may be arranged later for that parish church with which he was linked throughout his life, and which was also very close to his heart).

Brian had also planned in writing, or in the wee things he said to people along the way, most of the content of this service. It was to be, he declared firmly, Order Two in *The Book of Common Prayer 2004*, without addition or subtraction! He knew what the hymns would be, what the psalm and readings would be and what the prayers would be, but the bit he could not plan was the address!

The other thing which none of us can exactly plan, is the day of our departing, and Brian, whose death we expected, in the end, departed this life more quickly than we would have imagined. He would have known the liturgical day of his entering into glory. Brian left this life in the middle of that last little period of preparation for the coming of the Lord at Christmas, the seven days in which the *O antiphons* were traditionally sung. These are the little verses, based on the titles for the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, which together make up the marvellous Advent hymn *O come, O come Emmanuel*. On Brian's day of departing, he possibly even said the *O antiphon* of that day, which in the hymn goes like this:

O come, thou rod of Jesse, free  
thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
from depths of hell thy people save  
and give them victory o'er the grave.

How appropriate. It was the knowledge of God's absolute victory over Satan, death and hell in the person and work of his Son Jesus Christ, which was the very heart and basis of Brian's life and ministry. You can see that clearly in the hymns and readings he has chosen:

'Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son'  
'Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim',

and the instruction that he is to go out to lively music!

The same theme is seen more fully in the readings, the first of which is from *1 Peter* - interestingly, not one of the readings suggested in the funeral service, so its message must be one he felt very personally:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, Undeclared, unfading, kept in heaven for you.....  
.....As the outcome of your faith, you receive the salvation of your souls.

One of the things I can hear Brian say at this point, in a rather firm way to a preacher at a funeral service is 'Remember, the sermon at a funeral service is not a eulogy...it is a proclamation of the resurrection'.

Well, Brian, as the one bit you didn't plan, I want to totally agree, but I also want to say a little bit about Brian Mayne, because the life of Christ in the world is incarnational, and it is seen in people who are human like yourself.

Brian was, for all who knew him well, a great, reliable and constant *friend*, above everything else. Brian, you were greatly loved, and you have friends who grieve today all over the world, especially in the world of liturgy. I have had messages this morning from people involved in the *Church of England Liturgical Commission* and the *International Anglican Liturgical Consultation*. It is not just that they will miss your expertise, they will miss you simply as 'you'. Your former curates loved you, those whom you taught on the lay readership course speak warmly of you, those involved in the General Synod of the Church of Ireland and especially the *Liturgical Advisory Committee* will miss you profoundly, and speak warmly of you, even in those grumpy moments when you sighed and spoke your mind!

I personally got to know Brian particularly well when we travelled together to the 1999 *Societas Liturgica* and *International Anglican Liturgical Consultation* in Kerala in South India. It was a fascinating trip, not least to see how Brian fitted into an ordinary-class seat on the plane! We explored Mumbai together, travelled to Kerala together, discovered that the Consultation meeting had been banned by the government together, and ate curry for lunch, dinner and breakfast together (well, actually, Brian *hated* curry, a fact he made known to those who had eyes to see). But it was on a spiritual level that I got to know Brian on that trip. He spoke warmly of the profound influence the *Campaign of Renewal* in the Diocese of Down and Dromore had on his life in the 1970s, and especially his visits to St Michael le Belfry in York and his valuing of the gift of tongues.

The highlight of that visit to India for Brian, I think I can say without doubt, was the visit to the local cathedral, where we experienced Holy Communion according to the rite of the Church of South India, the church which had been so influential in our modern communion rite in the Church of Ireland and where the peace had been re-introduced after many centuries. It was the moment when people went forward to the communion rail barefoot, out of reverence for the Lord, which particularly impacted

Brian, and he would speak of that for many years to come.

I find it interesting that Brian chose as his final Gospel reading, that little passage from *John 6*, with its eucharistic overtones:

Jesus said to them, 'I am the Bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst....'

And then again that great resurrection certainty:

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

In his latter days, food was a mixed blessing to Brian. We even noticed when we took him out for his last meal with the *Liturgical Advisory Commission* that he was finding it hard to enjoy his food; and I know that in these latter days, Valerie was trying everything to make food palatable, interesting and even possible. But the last time I saw him, in all his weakness, he was able to tell me the train timetable of communion services in and around Downpatrick, with a wee comment thrown in that it was hard to find one on a certain Sunday of the month!

For Brian, the food of the Bread of Life, in his personal walk with Jesus Christ, made available at the Table of the Lord, was vitally important, even when no other food was attractive to him. Now Brian is in the place where eucharists have ceased, absent from the body, but absolutely present with the Lord, in the closer company and communion of the One he loved, served, and lived and died for: the One he has seen through a glass darkly, but now sees face to face, as he awaits the great banquet with all the redeemed on the last day, of which the eucharist is a foretaste.

-Yes, Brian was a *liturgist*. He know the *BCP2004* better than anyone else I know. He even has all the editorial corrections somewhere!

-Yes, Brian was a prolific writer. *Columba Press* will greatly miss him! He even wrote a foreword for my own planned book on Holy week liturgy before he died.

-Yes, Brian had an amazing memory for people and the detail of their lives. A worldwide network of friends.

-Yes, Brian was a lifelong member of his beloved Church of Ireland, and is being buried at Saul, the very first place of worship in this land, in his robes.

But, above all else, clear in all he has chosen for this service and in his life, Brian loved his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, served Jesus Christ, is redeemed by Jesus Christ, and is safely in the presence of Jesus Christ for all eternity.

Today, 23<sup>rd</sup> December, is the last and climactic day of the *O antiphons*, with the great prayer 'O come, O come, Emmanuel'. 'Emmanuel' means, of course, 'God with us',

and my prayer is that Jesus Christ, God who remained and remains with Brian in and through all things, would also prove his deep presence among us as we grieve his loss, and that we would know the reality of Christ's presence more than ever this Christmas.

Just a 'PS', if you can have a 'PS' in a sermon. I think it's true to say (correct me, Brian, if I am wrong!) that the words 'Brian Mayne' come only once in the *Book of Common Prayer 2004*. They come on p.337 in the footnotes explaining to whom particular collects and post communion Prayers are to be attributed. Footnote 24 says; 'Original prayer by Brian Mayne'. This refers to the several post communion prayers which he wrote and his last book was on the subject of post communion prayers.

What better way to finish this funeral sermon than to use one of those prayers, written about another saint (you can guess which), and applying it to Brian:

Just and merciful God,  
we have heard your word  
and received new life at your table.  
Kindle in us the flame of love,  
by which *Brian* bore witness to the gospel,  
to encourage our brothers and sisters in faith.  
We ask this for his sake. Amen.