

The Funeral of Chris Zochowski,

St Ninian, Pollokshields, 17th January 2017

Ecclesiastes 3.1: For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die....

I think it would be fair to say that death came kindly, peacefully and in a timely manner to Chris, delivering him and his beloved ones from the terrible effects of a horrible and cruel disease. But we may be worrying that such a random and senseless destroying of a good and faithful life is permitted in our good God's world. Any attempt to address that worry and the questionings it inevitably raises is a very complex theological task which no one, however great, has ever done entirely satisfactorily, and this sermon for Chris is hardly the place for any of that. Suffice it to say that I learned many years ago from a very wise priest, Duncan Sladden, one of my predecessors at St Columba's, Largs, whom some of you may very well remember from his time in our diocese, that we are not likely to find God so much in what happens to us in this world as in how we respond to what happens. So, I am sure that Chris, whose faith did not waver, and who thanked me from his last bed for offering him the church's ministry to the dying – a moment of sheer grace I will never forget – found God with him in the love and devotion of Kate, David and Nathan, his older sister Julie and younger brother Paul and their families, in the knowledge of the prayers and good will of so many people, as also in the Holy Communion brought to him regularly by his Rector and occasionally by his Bishop. For, as we must trust, *ubi caritas, ibi deus est*, where there is love, there is God. And Chris lived and suffered and died in love, human and divine.

Throughout all of that Chris did not lose his great, unique sense of humour, a good example of which was his proposing to Kate a romantic weekend. This turned out to be an overnight stay at a B&B in Moffat followed by a day at last year's Diocesan Synod, an event which I, for one, have never associated with anything remotely romantic! Anyhow Kate told me how much she appreciated that synodical day as so many people, delighted to see Chris there among them, expressed to her their affection and respect for him and I know that that has continued in lovely letters and messages since his death. Of course, none of that is accidental because it is evoked by the kind of person Chris was – unfailingly interested in people and concerned to do his best for them. One of my correspondents has described him as a *good, faithful and unassuming servant*. As our Diocesan Secretary, efficient, effective and immensely helpful, he exhibited all of these qualities and so endeared himself to many, many people all around the diocese. Speaking personally, and having known Chris from my time as Rector here, I always found him supportive and understanding and very willing to make his contribution. His terrible illness and enforced withdrawal from St Ninian's and Diocesan work have been hard for us all to witness and to bear.

Of Chris's faith there can be no doubt – he was a cradle Episcopalian, brought up and nurtured in the faith at All Saints', St Andrews where he was a chorister, devoted to serving Christ in that tradition, not least here at St Ninian's as Lay Rep and choir member. Nor can there be any doubt of how great a dad he was, never happier than when he was spending time with his boys. No doubt also, that his faith and capacity for love had much to do with the incredible strength, patience and determination he showed whilst living with MND, all the time knowing how it would kill him in the end.

So it is that we all, knowing all of this, and offering the funeral liturgy of our church, commend Chris with undimmed faith, hope and love to the love and mercy of Christ who loves him and all of us with an everlasting, overwhelming love and who, as the gospel assures us, has prepared a place for his beloved child, Chris. **Amen.**

Chris was born in St. Andrews in 1955, son of Ann and Zbyszek and brother to Julie and Paul.

From a very early age he demonstrated a great determination which was to guide him through all of his life. Once he made up his mind about something it was very difficult to persuade him to alter it.

When his Polish grandmother visited when he was a baby he would turn to see who was at the handle of his pushchair and if he saw it was her, he yelled every time. He was determined that she should not be the one to push him.

Aged about three or four and determined not to be blamed for a crash at the front door, he rushed round the back with blood dripping down his face from a cut on his head, saying "It wasn't me!"

Chris loved swimming, water sports and the beaches in St. Andrews. Determined to jump into a pool at the East Sands around the pier, which was deep enough for adults to swim in, he took off and ran towards it. His Mum, frozen with fear sent his sister running after him. Fearlessly he went straight in - and straight under. It required a man swimming there to pull him out. Completely undaunted he set off again and again to try to repeat his great run to the water. We had to go home early that day.

Later when he **could** swim well he responded to a challenge to jump from the high dive board on holiday. He said it was easy. He didn't have his glasses on so he couldn't see where he was going!

Chris was always a thrill seeker, keen to try out the 'dangerous' rides at the Lammas Market and other fairs and parks and sometimes building them himself at Scout camps. He had a lifelong interest in Scouting, sport and cycling, going on youth hostelling holidays with friends from a young age and always returning with grand tales of his adventures.

His schooldays at Madras College were full of successes and after a brief flirtation with dentistry as a career he graduated with a degree in Business Studies. He worked with Glasgow District Council, married Katherine and settled in Glasgow. There was great joy when his sons David and Nathan came along, and he demonstrated his patience and determination when passing on his knowledge and skills to them. He was always willing to help out, a trait possibly learned from Scout Bob-a-Job weeks. There are many houses of family and friends with rooms wallpapered by Chris.

As a family member he was always there for you. You could talk to him about anything and he would listen and give considered advice where needed. He was also incredibly funny, not exactly a comedian but in his company we all had some of the best laughs we've ever had, such as the time empathising with Polish relatives and family friends, but lacking the language skills with which to do so, he repeatedly nodded and encouraged the conversation on with a "bardzo... bardzo..." believing this to be saying okay...right... but in fact *bardzo* simply means "very". Chris had a great, unique sense of humour and his brilliant laugh continued to the end. As difficult as it became for Chris to speak during the past year, he never gave up saying something funny even if just to raise the spirits of those closest to him.

Chris always loved a family gathering, making a point of speaking to everyone, and having the ability to include everybody effortlessly.

Always kind, always thoughtful and considered, he was a good brother, husband, father, uncle and friend.

Don't cry because it's over - smile because it happened.