

The family have shared a number of memories and thoughts about Betty Robinson. I have only got to know her over the last 12 years since I came to this Parish. From the very outset she told me that I wouldn't see her in Church very often and she wasn't quite sure what she believed anymore. Over this time, as she spoke of her early years in the Isle of Wight, where her father was a GP, her own medical training, her time working as a matron in different schools, as locum for Dr Jessop here in this area, as one of the first members of staff of the new Sutton Park School where she enjoyed teaching for many years, (all of this combined with bringing up her family on her own) I came to know a very warm and engaging person, not only speaking about herself and her life but also about others.

One memory in particular stands out for me. At this stage she had already survived one diagnosis of cancer and then news had come of a second, unrelated diagnosis. I had called to see her and we were chatting when the phone rang. She looked at the number coming up and said, 'I'd better take this. It is my doctor.' I sat and listened as she calmly discussed her illness with her doctor and the possible options for treatment. She very calmly asked, 'At my age is this worth treating – or should we just let nature take its course?'

I was left with a picture of someone at peace with life, at peace with herself. She agreed to treatment and lived on in the house in Sutton that she shared with Jane and Ninian. Thanks to Jane and Ninian, and in latter years a wonderful team of carers, she continued to live in the house, enjoying the view over Bull Island, finally dying peacefully in her own bed the other night.

She was also a person who did not like unnecessary fuss. Today we gather to give thanks to God for a lady who has touched our lives lives, a lady who has amused us, who has listened to us, loved us, argued with us and we commend her to the loving care of Almighty God.

Betty had a love of gardening. I senses a certain disappointment in my failures in this regard. We are heading into the depths of winter. But even in the winter, in the rose bush that grows at the door of this Church, there are always signs of new life, new shoots. Something of this I think came to the mind of Paul as he wrote these words of reassurance to the Christians in Corinth:

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

As she worked in the garden Betty Robinson will have known the lesson of the seed. The seed, seemingly so insignificant, so vulnerable, contains within it all the potential of the magnificent plant. But before that can happen we have to let go of the seed, bury it in the earth.

The other night, in the quietness of her own room, Betty Robinson died peacefully.. You, the family have had to let her go. It is our hope and prayer and trust that the one we have let go has entered into that fuller life that God

has prepared for us all, where there is no more sorrow, no more separation from those who have gone before – only peace in the closer presence of God..

We give them back to thee, dear Lord, who gavest them to us. Yet as thou didst not lose them in giving, so we have not lost them by their return. What thou gavest thou takest not away, O Lover of souls; for what is thine is ours also if we are thine. And life is eternal and love is immortal, and death is only an horizon, and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up, strong Son of God, that we may see further; cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly; and draw us closer to thyself that we may know ourselves to be nearer to our loved ones who are with thee. And while thou dost prepare for us, prepare us also for that happy place, that where they are and thou art, we too may be for evermore.