

One of my memories of my first Sunday in this Parish was of being warmly greeted at the end of the service by a delightful couple, both speaking with West Midlands accents, Maurice and Kay Bishop. I could have been back home in Birmingham. Maurice even supported Birmingham City though I'm afraid Kay supported Leicester.

When Maurice, who had been an RAF pilot during the last war joined Aer Lingus, he and Kay settled in this area. Here they reared their children Chris, Paul and Helen. They shared their pain in the loss of Helen in a tragic accident. Around the time of Maurice's retirement they settled in the apartment in Corr Castle. Just before I arrived here they joined this Parish and very much entered into the life of this place; regular in Sunday worship and, in the case of Kay, in the Bridge club.

The family have shared some of their memories of Kay and each of you will have your own particular memories of Kay as mother, grandmother, friend. I invite you this morning to come before God with your own particular memories of Kay and give thanks to God for all that was good and true in her life, for the many ways in which her life touched and enriched your own.

The Kay I remember had a lovely no-nonsense, can-do approach to life. She was immensely proud of her Midland roots. Maurice's death was a huge loss to her but, supported by Chris and Paul and their families, she built a life for herself. I remember her saying one afternoon I was in with her, 'Well, you can't sit around and mope all the time, can you?'

In recent years her health has steadily declined but she was still determined to participate in family events and celebrations. She really appreciated the ways in which the family enabled her to do that, enabling her to keep her independence, enabling her to stay in her own home. She also appreciated the love and support of friends and was thankful to the ladies who came to visit her from St Fintan's.

I recall a lady with a warm smile, giving a generous welcome to anyone who called. She was a lady with a very firm Christian faith, one to whom prayer came quite naturally, one with whom it was natural to pray.

Of course, death always involves loss on the part of those who miss their loved ones. Kay had lived to a good age but however much we may anticipate the death of a loved one there is still that sense of loss, that gap that no-one else can fill in quite the same way.

So, as we give thanks to God for Kay this day, we remember before God those who will miss her most. I think particularly of Chris and Paul and their families and all those who loved this gentle and cheerful soul. Those of us outside the immediate family assure you of our love and prayers in the days to come as you remember Kay.

And so today, on this the day of her funeral, we gather to give thanks to God for the life of Kay Bishop, for her faithfulness along all stages of her journey with God and with those she loved. The writer of the first letter to Timothy gives this advice to a younger man:

But as for you, man of God, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. *1 Tim 6:11 ff*

‘pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness.’ This seems to me to draw together our memories of Kay Bishop, who so many of you remember today with love and affection.

Well done you good and faithful servant. Receive the kingdom prepare for you from the beginning of the world.