

Twenty nine years ago, as a young couple with our one year old son, Anthony, Rachel and I moved into the Rectory in Finglas. Over the following three years we faced a number of ups and downs. A number of figures stand out for us over that period for the warmth of their welcome and the practical help they gave to Rachel and myself. One of those we remember with huge affection is Mrs Martin. We remember her coming to the Rectory to babysit to let us out for a night. Not only would Anthony be well looked after (probably spoilt!) but the kitchen would be spotless. It wasn't just a matter of her saying yes when we asked her; there were the offers that were made, cheerfully and without fuss, as well as the sympathetic ear and word of advice.

The family will remember a mother left to rear young children after the sudden death of your father. You will have your own memories of the hard work, the self sacrifice, the worrying, the encouragement, the love, the pride as you each grew and made your own way in life and reared your own families.

She came to the Church of Ireland from the Roman Catholic Tradition. Sadly many who make this transition can become more protestant than the protestants but not so with Mary Martin. There was a gentleness and a sincerity to her spirituality that was just part of who she was.

Tomorrow, June 9<sup>th</sup>, is the Feast of St Barnabas. Barnabas is a character in the early Church who did not grab the spotlight but had a role as a great encourager of others – that will be my memory of Mary Martin.

As I wondered what Bible reading to use today at her funeral my mind turned immediately to the Beatitudes, the opening section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This passage speaks of the gentleness, the sincerity, the generosity of spirit that mark my memories of Mrs Martin as I realise that in her we each experienced something of God's love and care for us all.

We also read Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians. In this Paul presents us with the reality of our own mortality and death, he talks very plainly of the body wearing out. But just as he talks of the reality of physical decline and death, Paul talks of our new heavenly home. The words that really stand out for me are ; "So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." This is our hope for Mary Martin, that all the limitations of recent times, the frailty, along with all the limitations that go with being human are "swallowed up by life", that is our inheritance in Christ.

So today we gather to thank God for Mary Martin, for the many different ways he touched our lives, for her hard work, the self sacrifice, the worrying, the encouragement, the love. We come to pray for ourselves as we let go, praying that the sense of loss at this time may be softened by the many happy memories of times past and the assurance that she is at peace in the loving care of God.

We gather to set her life and our lives in the context of our faith in a loving and living God as we commend Mary Martin, a loving and devoted mother and grandmother, remarkable human being into the hands of a loving heavenly Father.

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.