

As I remarked to Pat Trayer not so very long ago, ‘Pat, we go back a long way.’ I first met her when Peter and I were undergraduates back in the late 60’s, early 70’s. During those years I remember a bright, cheerful, hospitable lady with a wide range of interests who always gave me a warm welcome when I came out to Sutton with Peter. There was a ‘no nonsense’ side to her that appealed to me from the start. You knew where you stood – if she thought you were talking rubbish, she would share that insight with you. After Peter and I left Trinity, our paths would cross from time to time. When my then fiancée, Rachel, was teaching for a short while in Sutton Park in 1975, Pat welcomed her to the house in Sutton.

Then in 2005 I came to the Parish of Howth and I was delighted to see that Pat was still here, still full of life. Though I did remark to her on more than one occasion that she obviously still saw her Rector as a student in his early 20’s. In the years that have followed I came to know the lady I had first met nearly forty years earlier. She never missed Church, she was very much part of the community of St Mary’s. She loved the midweek service and coffee, remarking to me on several occasions that she thought it was one of the best things in the Parish. She was not uncritical of Church, she asked questions and was not one to be fobbed off with platitudes.

In earlier years she had been hurt by the Church – she really felt it when, on returning to Ireland, she was not, as a separated woman, welcome in the Mothers Union. Several times over tea in Strand Road she would raise

something that had cropped up in the service the previous Sunday, asking, ‘Now tell me, do you really believe that?’ I would go on to explain my thought processes; sometimes she would agree and sometimes she would look at me quizzically saying, ‘Mmm, I’m not so sure about that.’

What I am coming around to is a memory of a lady who was honestly searching for truth. In that search she was quite prepared to live with uncertainty. She questioned – and yet she was in her pew in St Mary’s, Sunday by Sunday, coming forward to receive communion. She did not see any contradiction in that – it was all part of who she was as one on a lifelong journey of discovery.

Very proud of her training in the Adelaide, she was very much a carer and she had a real sensitivity for older people. She loved the time she worked for Dr Eustace in Highgrove and looked back on that with a real sense of pride. She was determined that she was not going to be a burden to her family. When the time came when it was clear that her days of independent living were coming to an end she went into St Patrick’s in Baldoyle. I don’t think I was the only one who wondered, ‘How is Pat going to settle in there?’ From the word go she spoke of her gratitude to the staff, how fortunate she was to have found this place.

At times like this I often find myself going back to words of St Paul as he writes to that rather troublesome bunch of Christians in Corinth. I like it

because he talks very honestly of the body just wearing out. I'll just read part of it:

Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.....

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

I suspect Pat, while she may have quizzed St Paul on some of the details, would appreciate the down to earth honesty of that. I just stay with the image of Pat, liberated from the limitations of recent years, from the limitations of just being human – that what is mortal has been swallowed up by life.

I have spoken of her honesty, of her impatience with platitudes. She would not appreciate us making her out to be other than what she was. Pat was a wonderful human being with all the strengths and weaknesses of a human being. She was a warm, caring lady who thought deeply on a whole range of issues. She could on occasion say the most outrageous things, she was not politically correct. She would grin and say, 'My family think I am awful at times – well, so I am!'

Today I find so much to be thankful for in her life and so I thank God for Pat and with great affection commend her to the loving care of her heavenly Father.