We gather here in St Mary's in Howth for the funeral of Jack Heaslip, to honour the memory of a man who made a lasting impression on so many people in so many ways. Jack being Jack had certain views as to how his funeral was to be conducted – the sermon was to be short and it was not to focus on Jack Heaslip but on the Christian faith he lived and proclaimed in so many ways and in so many contexts.

You are here today with your own memories of Jack that will speak far more eloquently to your hearts that any words I speak. We will take the time today to come before God with our own particular memories, our own particular thank givings. We will talk of faith but it is hard to talk of faith apart from the people in whom, through whom we experience it

How did Jack see himself? In the chat in the apartment on Monday morning after Jack had died someone recalled that someone in the past had told Jack he was a 'holy heteroclite'. Jack grinned and said he quite liked that. A heteroclite – a person who is slightly out of the ordinary, slightly hard to define, who is not amenable to labels that people might seek to put on them. I found myself turning to Paul's First Letter to the Church at Corinth. Here was a Church who loved labels.

> each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." [13] Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
> *1 Cor 1:12,13*

Paul goes on to shift the focus onto the Christ who found him on the Damascus Road and whom he was to serve for the rest of his life.

> [4] For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?
> [5] What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. *1 Cor 3:4*

Servants though whom you came to believe. I think that would be at the heart of how Jack would have seen himself. Maybe the greatest tribute we can pay to Jack is to reflect on the faith that inspired him, that he shared so faithfully that we experienced in him and through him as husband, as father, grandfather, teacher, chaplain, priest, mentor and friend.

The family have reflected carefully on the passages to be read at this funeral service. As I read over them a number of thoughts about life, about faith, about hope come to mind. Life, faith, the life of faith is about learning – my understanding is always partial, always imperfect. So those words from Paul's letter to Philippi strike a chord with me.

> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. *Phil 3:12*

Whenever I read these words I have a picture of Christ ahead of me, leading me on, drawing me into a deeper understanding of his love and his purpose. Jack the teacher, the priest always open to new understanding, new insights.

At its heart faith involves a letting go, an identification with the Christ of Gethsemene who says 'Let this cup pass from me, yet not what I want but what you want.' We become ones in whom and through whom Christ continues to work in the world of today.

Of course we live this, we work through this in the real world of human frailty, of weakness, of sickness. But we discover that the Christ who calls us is the Christ who comes to meet us in our vulnerability and speaks his word of peace

> 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. *John 14:27*

Peace, peace with himself, peace with God was certainly something that will characterise my memory of Jack. It is in the context of that peace, that Jack was able to talk quite naturally of his mortality. As he said to me, he was not afraid of death, it was the process of getting there that concerned him. He died quite peacefully, in his own home, with his beloved Trish at his side.

The last few months cannot have been easy for Jack, for Trish, for the whole family, as they walked this hard path with him, loving and cherishing him along the way. It is hard watching one you love, one who had been so active, so full of life, decline. Paul talks of this mortality very naturally in his second letter to the Corinthians and then goes on to speak of the hope that we have in Christ of life, resurrection life, eternal life. He writes

> So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. [17] For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,
> [4] 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. [5] He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.
>
> *2 Cor 4:16ff, 5:4ff*

'So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.' That is our hope this day for Jack Heaslip, husband, father, grandfather, brother, teacher, priest, mentor, dear friend to so many people. All the frailty of this last while, the frustrations even Jack must have felt, along with all the limitations that just go with being human, swallowed up by life in the closer presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may say of Jack Heaslip, as the Apostle said of himself:

> [7] (He has) fought the good fight, (he has) finished the race, (he has) kept the faith.

Trish, Catherine, Eoghan, the whole family, who Jack loved and who loved him all along the way, have lost a dear husband, father, grandfather. However strong our faith in these times, our loss, our pain our sadness is real. May you know that you are held in the prayers of so many people whose lives have been profoundly touched by your beloved Jack.

'Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Receive the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.'