

Parish reflection (Margaret Swift - PPC Chair)

Well, here we are, almost at the end of a very busy and sad time for our Parish, but the time has now come for us to say goodbye to our beloved Parish Priest of 30 years, Fr. Dennis. Of course, our hearts are heavy and we hold treasured memories of him, many of which we have shared over the past few days; we have laughed, we have cried, but the overriding feeling is that he was 'a priest of the people, for the people'.

We have celebrated his life and given thanks for the support, the wisdom, the advice and encouragement, not least the care and the love that he gave. He has been with us for both our happiest times and our saddest times, sharing in our family occasions and, as I have heard it said many times, he will be a hard act to follow.

Many people came together to ensure that Fr. Dennis could stay in his home and in his beloved Parish of St. Anne's. Far too many to thank individually, but our special thanks, and love, go to Sister Bernadette, and her family, for all their support and care; to Sue and her team of carers and to you, Fr. Dennis' parishioners, for all you have done and all you are still doing.

We thank Bishop Patrick, the Priests and deacons from the High Peak Deanery and Nottingham diocese, for celebrating this thanksgiving for Fr. Dennis' life with us. We also thank the Presentation Sisters for coming back to be with us and all you have done for us.

And so, for Fr. Dennis, his earthly journey has come to an end. He has left behind a rich harvest, the full extent of which is known only to the Lord and the many people enriched by his life and work. He devoted himself to his church and his people. As we say our final farewell to Fr Dennis, we remember him fondly as a caring person, a dedicated Priest and true friend. I will finish with the last few lines from a poem by Patsy Gaul that I hope will reflect some of our thoughts and our feelings about Fr Dennis:

'In every heart you touched,
in every life you changed,
in every thought you inspired,
your love lives on.
Your voice still echoes,
your life still inspires,
your light still shines...and always will'

Fr. Dennis, we are blessed to have been a part of your life. Rest in Peace.