

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is a great privilege to stand once again in this noble pulpit, and I am very honoured, if not also a little fearful, that Michael should have asked me to be the preacher at his funeral service. I worked very closely with Michael here for six years, and have kept in touch with him since that time, so have genuinely come to know him as a real friend and not just a colleague. Yet I am aware that there is much more to his rich life than his time among us here in Truro, and I'm grateful to Nicola and to Michael's children among others for helping me to fill in some of the gaps.

When asked to select the readings to accompany this address, I was tempted for a moment to go with the Eucharistic readings for the day that deal with the gory and rather unedifying story of the Beheading of John the Baptist. Michael often challenged me to preach using the set readings however inappropriate they were for the occasion, and one of our favourite private pastimes was to dissect the sermons of visiting preachers who tried to do just that but ended up in some very strange theological places as a result! I imagine that Michael would have seen the humour in my trying to do that today, for he was always ready to roar with laughter at the incongruous scenes of Fawlty Towers and he loved Les Dawson, all of which probably made him particularly suited to ministry in a cathedral.

In the event we have settled on that very special eucharistic gospel from John, and selected verses from Hebrews chapter 13. And it's from the latter that I draw my text for this address: 'Through Jesus let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.' That for me sums up the most important aspect of Michael's life as a man and as a priest – seeing life as a continual offering of ourselves to God, and seeing the church's worship as the primary means of making that offering, not least through the sacrifice of praise that we offer today in celebrating the Eucharist together. Michael was privileged to serve as a priest in a series of places that understood the importance of worship, and he made a significant contribution to the worshipping life of each of them. Following his curacy in Lowestoft, he followed in his father's footsteps in becoming a minor canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, where as Sacrist he played a leading role in the organisation of services large and small, from the daily round of Evensongs to large state occasions such as the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 and the Wedding of Prince Charles and Diana, Princess of Wales in 1981. Nine years followed as Vicar of the large medieval Abbey Church of Tewkesbury, one of the Cathedral-like Greater Churches of our land, before Michael moved to Windsor as a Canon of St. George's Chapel, and from there to this Cathedral as Dean in 1998. In all of these positions he was able to organise and lead worship with enormous skill and grace, enabling congregations large and small to share something of the mystery and majesty of God's glory. He understood the importance of our large churches and cathedrals to be places where many can gather on special occasions to find inspiration for their work in their local contexts, and he was a gifted preacher, especially on those special occasions when he was able to relate the great teachings of the Christian faith to particular groups within the community, or to those experiencing some particular joy or sorrow in their lives. Yet he was equally at home in more intimate worshipping contexts – at the Royal Chapel in Windsor Great Park where the Queen and the Queen Mother were regular Sunday worshippers, and at numerous parishes of this Diocese where he went to provide cover or as a guest preacher, something that has continued since his retirement. Just two months ago, he and Nicola were with us on the Isles of Scilly where Michael was acting for the second time as Holiday Chaplain on St. Martin's, and where his liturgical ministry was greatly appreciated by locals and visitors alike.

What was true of Michael's ministry through the spoken word was equally true of his ministry of music. He was blessed with an outstanding voice which he used to great effect in leading Choral Evensong and in his Eucharistic presidency. He also had a special party piece when it came to Advent – a setting of the plainsong anthem 'Christus Vincit' – which would begin with the choir at the West End of the Cathedral and Michael at the East singing alternately to each other as they processed to the centre of the building. It

was always a magic moment in the Cathedral's year. As someone with such a keen interest and skill in Church music, it is no wonder that Michael was able to build on the work of his predecessor Dean Shearlock and of a series of excellent Directors of Music in developing a Cathedral Choir that has grown to such national prominence and critical acclaim. It has always been a sadness to me that the manner and speed of Michael's retirement from here has left so much of this unsaid until now, and I do hope that this solemn occasion when we commend him to God may be seen, at least in part, as our corporate tribute to his significant ministry to the Church of England both here and elsewhere, and indeed to the wider nation.

'Through Jesus let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.' The writer of Hebrews encourages us to see not only our worship but the whole of our life as a sacrifice of praise, just as God's graciousness to us in worship spills over into the whole of our lives. For Michael, the wine of the Eucharist led naturally to the wine of a post-service reception, God's hospitality in worship to a life characterised by hospitality to others. As Hebrews reminds us, 'do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.' Michael was one of life's extraverts, unlike most clergy who are naturally rather private people. It was a joy to watch him in action at a party in the Chapter House or at home, finding something to say to everyone who was there, so that everyone felt welcome and each one felt special. A generation of chorister families and Cathedral volunteers, 'the great and the good' of the county, the fire service chaplains who came under his care and many ordinary people who had come here for a special service – they all experienced something of that hospitality that is part of the joy of the gospel.

It's that sense of joy of which Michael's children speak as they recall their early lives at home, that interest in people and the readiness to laugh with them that so characterised Michael's public ministry. His daughter Emma recalls how teasing was his forte, whether it was recounting their childhood mishaps, embarrassing them in front of boys or girls from school, or commenting on their latest outfits or hairstyles – they were always labelled as 'interesting'. Of their music choices, his usual comment when listening to a pop song was 'Are they in pain?' And as for Michael's love of fashion, I think we can all recognise in Emma's comments something of the Michael whom we knew and loved. She writes, 'Dad liked to look his very best and he always looked immaculate and smelt delicious – a nice new fragrance was always a safe bet at Christmas! He loved dressing up and spent hours in the bathroom getting ready for weddings, Royal Ascot or garden parties at Buckingham Palace – any excuse to don his top hat and frock coat.' By contrast when he was on the beach, so Emma tells us, he liked to keep his tan topped up by exposing as much flesh as possible – 'bronzy, bronzy' he used to say. She comments 'Thankfully he moved on from the Ambre Solaire Oil of the 70s to a more sensible sunscreen! We had such a happy childhood with him and Mum', Emma goes on to say, 'filled with fun and laughter, and we were blessed to have had such wonderful parents. He was always there for us, supporting us in whatever we did, and his love was unwavering and unconditional. He was an equally wonderful Grandpa who adored his three grandsons and made huge efforts to spend as much time as possible with them. We will always treasure very happy memories of him and remember him with undying love.'

There is much today for which we say thank you, as we celebrate a very special life and commend Michael to God's love. As the Writer to Hebrews says in his previous Chapter: 'Time would fail to tell of everything', but we can just list a few of Michael's many interests: sport, especially cricket which was a lifelong passion, as was his questionable support for Northampton Town Football Club; pre-war motor cars, including his 3 successive Morris 8s all called Emily; and foreign travel, especially to France. Nicola tells us that he was also game to try his hand at almost anything – swimming with dolphins, scuba diving, canoeing and parascending (which sounds terrifying); archery, falconry and horse riding. Like so many clergyman, he also loved trains, and owned a Hornby train set from the age of 12 until his dying day. Michael admitted that from an early age he wanted to be a train driver, and I think we can all be glad that he changed his mind, or we would have had to put up with an awful lot of trains running late. Every person who has told me anything about Michael has mentioned his capacity to be late for almost anything, and I can assure you that is perfectly true. Following Dean Shearlock for whom timekeeping was practically next to godliness, Michael encouraged us to be a bit more relaxed about such things,

which was sometimes liberating but more often a Precentor's nightmare! Yet he was able to laugh at himself in this regard, recalling the time when he was late for a Royal engagement in Windsor Great Park which caused the Queen to drive around in circles for a further ten minutes so as not to arrive before him. Despite this, Her Majesty was pleased to convey upon Michael a lieutenancy within the Royal Victorian Order, as a mark of thanks for his pastoral and liturgical ministry to herself and her family.

But for my last memory, I want us to go far from Windsor and from this Cathedral, and to a scene from early in Michael's retirement. It was a time of change and transition in his life when he was not exercising priestly ministry for a while, but you would find him on the organ stool of his local church at Perranzabuloe, standing in as a parish organist to play the hymns and the voluntaries so that the worship and music of the parish could continue. I think that that little scene may say more about Michael than all his catalogue of high offices and significant achievements over the years. There he was, seeing a job that needed to be done, and discovering and displaying in that act of humble service something of the humility and service of the God whom he worshipped, the God to whom we commend him today.

'Through Jesus let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.' Let us offer our sacrifice of praise today for our dear brother Michael, that he may rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.