

CAROL

Tom, Lauren, Bella

We've come here today because we love Carol. The presence of so many is testimony to that love and to her love. The dark sadness of this farewell to her is dispelled by the love and the light that shone out of her.

All of us have vividly and indelibly printed on the memory of our hearts Carol's face, her smile, her eyes. A face lined with compassion. Carol had an extraordinary ability and capacity to put herself in the shoes of others especially those that suffered – be it emotionally, mentally or physically. From an early age she had a heart that wanted to nurse the needy and the wounded.

But this compassion could quickly turn to something more stern when she saw an injustice. Her softness for the vulnerable could turn to the anger of a lioness against those who trampled on others. Her love for Tom and her innate understanding of his deep feelings over Hillsborough strengthened her own resolve to help those who through no fault of their own found themselves victims of other people's bad decisions.

As Tom and Lauren told me last week the world desperately needs more Carols, always giving themselves for the good of others even to the end of their own life. We could pay no greater tribute to Carol today than to pledge ourselves to follow her wonderful example and dedicate ourselves to serving the broken-hearted.

There was a goodness that shone out from Carol that made all who came into contact with her be it friends, patients or colleagues that feel good about ourselves.

At Bishops Lodge where Tom works as gardener with Phil we were all like a little family. Whenever we had big events Carol and Lauren would join in.

Carol was always so appreciative of everything and of everyone and always such an encouragement to me personally.

Somehow she knew that bishops too needed encouraging just like the rest of the human family! There was a wisdom in her humanity. And we will all have our own special memories of her today which is the source of our thanksgiving and our celebration of her life.

My friends, some lives are measured by the length of days; others are measured by the depth of love and goodness. It is the latter with which we measure and treasure Carol this day.

Of course, none of our loves compares with the love that Tom, Lauren and Bella will always have for Carol. Let no-one talk about closure to our grief. There can never be, nor should there be, closure to the love that we all have for her.

We thank God for her kindness, her goodness, her love for Tom her husband and soul mate, for Lauren her daughter of whom she is eternally proud, for Bella her mother who loved her into this world and for us all.

Tom as a gardener knows that before a flower can bloom it is a seed that falls into the ground and dies. Nature is full of pictures of death giving way to life. Carol's life will now flower in our memories and in its own turn scatter seeds of love as we cherish and remember her. But more than that. The very love that she radiated has now returned to the source of all such true love.

Heaven is the destiny for those who love and feel at home in the presence of goodness and justice. Such is Carol's destiny. The seed has fallen and has already begun to flower in our hearts and in Heaven.

Jesus, who rose from the dead but first fell like a seed into the earth, said, "In my Father's house there are many, many rooms....I go to prepare a place for youso that where I am you maybe there too."

