

Fr. Dennis Moffatt – Funeral Address

(by Fr. George Evans)

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

The last time that I accompanied Fr. Dennis to this church was the Sunday before he died. Like every Sunday he picked me up at 8.30 am. to take us to church to get things ready for the Liturgy. Journeys with Fr. Dennis were always interesting, unlike some here today, I never had the privilege of having a detour into a quarry or football club car park or a supermarket car park or even a municipal car park. One journey I do remember was when we were going on a pilgrimage to Lastingham, Fr. Dennis had his new toy, his sat nav and this voice kept telling us “In a hundred yards turn right.” “At the next junction etc.” And it kept interrupting the conversation, it was very annoying. Suddenly in the depths of rural North Yorkshire we found ourselves doing a tour of a large industrial estate! It is still a great mystery but we got there in the end.

I’d like to share two other journeys with you. When Barbara of Eternal Memory was no longer able to get to church we used to take her communion. When you left Barbara you always had a warm glow inside you, no she didn’t ply us with strong drink she was one of those truly beautiful human beings who left you feeling good. We had left Barbara’s and hadn’t gone very far when Father said “I think we’ve taken a wrong turn.” We continued on until I was aware that we were going uphill on a familiar road. I looked to the right and saw a silvery ribbon glinting in the sunlight- it was the River Humber, we were on top of the Yorkshire Wolds! I noticed a sign for Beverly and Father said “I haven’t been to Beverly for years.” As one of us was feeling peckish, I needn’t tell you which one, I said that we were sure to find somewhere to eat in Beverly. We never got to Beverly. I don’t remember the name of the village but the pub was called the White Swan and we had a memorable lunch. We then found our way home.

The second journey was again on the way back from Barbara’s, the same warm glow and this time we weren’t going to make a mistake! Great, we were hurtling down the M62 when I noticed a sign that told me we were many, many miles passed the turn off we should have taken. I naively asked “Father what are we doing on this road?” and got the equally naive reply “Ooh I don’t know but we’ll get home.” and we did.

Father Dennis had another journey through life, tales of his childhood and his Mum and Dad and exploits on his Grandpa’s farm. You got the impression that given half a chance we’d be off chasing rabbits, climbing trees and doing the things that young boys do. He was so very, very proud of his family and I think they know it. This journey took him to Wath Grammar School and then on to a career at the Coal Board where he eventually spent hundreds of million pounds of our money. He was also keenly interested in the countryside and all things rural having involvement in The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

This could have been the life of any man or woman. We know it was Fr. Dennis's life because our paths crossed his. There was also another far more important journey that he undertook, the journey of faith and an unshakeable belief in God and His Son Jesus Christ. It started when he was a young man at the little Church of England mission at Highgate. You can walk from Highgate to Goldthorpe Parish Church where he went next and further up the road to the beautiful

and ancient church at Hickleton. He served the church in many capacities. Eventually he felt that the church he loved was leaving him behind and he sought out the Orthodox Church. He didn't leave just because of women priests but felt instinctively that something was wrong. He joined the Orthodox Church, it has to be said gingerly at first. Then it was like watching the sun rise as it dawned upon him that what the Orthodox Church teaches is what he had believed all his life

There is one thing that can't let pass before he goes down. Forgive me Fr. Philip and Fr. Michael but it used to get under his nose when in Lincolnshire they are always bragging about all their saints. There seems to be hundreds of them. Of course like me he knew that the Yorkshire saints were of great stature, the likes of St. John of Beverly, St. Hilda of Whitby and St. Wilfred of York but it never seemed enough. He was placated when I told him that we have thousands and thousands of saints in Yorkshire, known only to God!

There is one more thing I would like to share with you. Forgive me those who heard this the Sunday after Fr. Dennis had died. The Sunday before he was getting irate at something he had heard on Radio Sheffield about atheism and our increasingly secular society. I was just going through the Deacons Door with a jug in my hand to get hot water that we use in the Liturgy. Father said "When you think about it, a child born without a human father who grew up in a remote part of the world. Who healed the sick and raised the dead and was crucified by the Romans and three days later rose from the dead ..." I turned and saw that impish smile "Who would believe it?" he said and together we said "We do."

And so dear friend and Father, goodbye. May the holy angels guide you to your rest and may your Memory be Eternal.

Glory be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit