

Our beloved elder daughter Annie died on 12 June very suddenly of natural causes. We will lay her to rest on Wednesday 1 July at 12 noon.

At first, as well as the initial shock and disbelief, we were sad to think we could only have a graveside service limited to ten people. Then it struck us that Annie would have been ok with that as she loved the open air and had enjoyed many outdoor Masses on conferences and retreats.

Annie had a great zest for life. She was warm, witty, welcoming, loud, kind, loving, a passionate, inspirational teacher and evangelist who touched many people by her deep faith and the way she lived her life.

Annie was born 3 November, the feast day of St Martin de Porres. Her eldest brother James will share something of Martin's story at the graveside. He was a sixteenth century Dominican who joined an order devoted to teaching, working with the poor and disadvantaged. He is considered our saint who reminds us that education and teaching matter most when orientated to those in need. Annie's way of life, reaching out to all - a colleague called it 'her big heart' - embodied this.

Over the past couple of days our younger daughter Catherine and I have worked on the funeral booklet. We wanted to capture Annie's personality; the essence of her. It was surprisingly easy to choose the material as Annie seemed to point the way. We had found a small notebook in her room with only one entry: *'don't just live the length of life - live the breadth of it as well.'* Annie was only 41 but she had packed more into her short life than many people who live twice as long. So here was our first reading, picking up on the quote she had written - Ephesians 3: 14-18. Next, a psalm that reflected Annie. She loved walking and going on pilgrimage. She walked the Camino to Santiago de Compostela. More recently she made a personal pilgrimage from her home in Sheffield to the shrine in Walsingham covering about 15 miles each day, talking to people as she went and making a deep impression with her commitment to her faith and her joyful nature. Imagine my delight when I discovered Psalm 84, full of joy and praise, and entitled *'Pilgrimage Song.'* The gospel choice was easy: Matthew 25: 31-40 the parable of the sheep and the goats. As for photos, we chose one of her taken last year at the baptism of her youngest

nephew. Her eight nieces and nephews and many godchildren were very special to her and she loved playing silly games with them. The other photo was of Annie with young children clambering all over her at the orphanage in Kenya where she volunteered two summers running. She later set up a charity to establish a second orphanage which we will continue in her name with her twin brother Joe taking her place as one of the trustees. Joe chose a poem to read dedicated to their special relationship as twins. Matt, Annie's middle brother, wrote a blessing for the road which echoes her love of walking and ends as she continues the journey, gently pointing the way forward for those who will follow. It captures her beautifully - I can almost hear her long, purposeful strides. Annie's friend Sarah, an accomplished artist, who travelled with her to Assisi, sent a painting she had done specially - a goldfinch which Renaissance artists thought symbolised 'Resurrection.' We put this in too. As singing isn't permitted at the moment we chose a recording to play at the end of the service. A friend had sent the beautiful Irish song '*I arise today*' based on St Patrick's Breastplate which fitted perfectly, reflecting Annie's Irish heritage and ending on an uplifting note. You can download this at: <https://youtu.be/fgxzBxZoogc> We later found out that this was one of Annie's favourite songs, often sung at the Sheffield University Chaplaincy which was a big part of her life and also on their Holy Island Retreat which she helped organise. So, here was our finished booklet.

We have been inundated with about 100 sympathy and Mass cards and close on 300 messages. I'd started gradually replying and decided to send our booklet to Sister Isabel, a Justice and Peace contact who works for TRAC - Raising Awareness & Campaigning to end the demand for Human Trafficking as she had asked for the time and date of the funeral so she could pray for us. What happened next was amazing. Sister Isabel said she would start reading the booklet at the exact time of the funeral and join in the prayers, even downloading the song we had chosen. This touched me deeply. It suddenly became clear how we could bring together all the friends, colleagues and wider family who, in normal circumstances would have filled the church. By distributing the booklet in advance we could invite everyone to join in as our small graveside service began, adding their own personal reflections and memories at the same point where we would share ours: a virtual celebration of Annie's life.

Please pray for us as we try to come to terms with the sudden loss of our daughter, sister, aunt, godmother, friend, teacher and colleague. Annie was a gift from God. Now she returns to God. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Please share this message with others who may wish to join in our virtual celebration as we don't have contact details for everyone.

Anne and Calvin