

*St. John's Parish Messenger Sept. 1971*

This month, at the request of a number of his friends, the Panegyric given by the Rector at the funeral of Laurence Denham, is printed in place of the Rector's letter.

"Praise the Lord O my soul and forget not all His benefits." (Psalm 103).

My task today is not an easy one, for I come here, as I am sure you all do, with a tremendous Sense of loss.

We no longer have the physical presence of our vibrant friend Laurence Denham, and if your unoccupied moments have been like mine, then with me you have been thinking of the enormous contribution which Laurence made to your life, and not only to your life and mine, but to the lives of so many, who for a while, came under his influence. They may then have moved on to almost the whole globe, but no matter where they moved, they were never far from Laurence's thoughts, and his interest followed them.

Only last week he talked to me about some of the people he had known in China and how he hoped to see them if he was able to visit England next year.

Having no family, he was able to make all his family. No matter one's age, or problem, he was not only able to understand, but also to advise, not in a condescending manner, but as a friend at one with us.

So he could be and was, approached by young and old, by rich and poor, by the intellectual haves and have nots. His wide experience, and even his bachelor solitude, made it possible for him to win our confidence and evoke our support until we found that we had gladly given him a corner of our hearts, and this day we find it hard to believe that we, who placed so much reliance upon him, will have to face life without him.

Yet he would not have us mourn. He left me clear instructions: they are in part as follows:

*"A service with a note of joy and thanksgiving for the happiness of life, the opportunities of service, the encouragement and affection of so many friends and the frequent assurance of God's Holy Spirit in and around me."*

How typical of the man we knew. Look again at the key words: Joy, happiness, opportunities, encouragement, affection, service. I would like to believe that these words were chosen by him because they were, for him, a description of his own life. A life for which we come to give thanks today. There will be no self-pity because we have lost a friend, but gladness and thankfulness that here and there God raises up men who are giants among men, yet who are nevertheless able to be one with those of us who know our own limitations so well. Not that he was without fault, what man is? Surely there has been only one who was faultless. No, he knew and we knew his Achilles Heel, but there was so much else of him that was good and true that we forgave even as we were forgiven.

In requesting our hymns today, the note he left me drew attention to the line, "Fill me radiancy Divine", which Laurence regarded as a wonderful expression, of a truth he knew, and we saw in him a reflection of that Divine Radiancy. Surely here was the touchstone of all that the man was.

Perhaps it was not by coincidence that his earthly life came to an end on the eve of the day which we, in the Church Calendar, call "the Feast of the Transfiguration". This commemorates the occasion when Peter, James and John saw clearly the true nature of Jesus. He was the fulfilment of all Law and Prophecy, and He was more, He was the transforming Son of God.

Laurence knew in a personal way this same Jesus. For him through Bible, Prayer and Sacrament, he practised in the here and now, the daily actuality of walking with God. So we are not surprised when he requests that today we give thanks for the frequent assurance of God's Holy Spirit in and around him throughout his life.

Laurence Denham knew what it was to be in this world, but not of it. Yet this did not make him so other worldly that he was unable to be a man among men. One does not become a director of an international company without a high degree of professional competence. We then, remember and honour one who in church and commerce marked out the way for others to follow. We thank God for his life. We hallow every treasured remembrance of him, and in faith we commend to our Heavenly Father the soul of this, His humble, obedient servant.

My final words are a quotation used by Laurence after I last administered the Blessed Sacrament to him. For a moment he remained in silent prayer and then he opened his eyes, smiled at me and in a firm voice said, "Praise the Lord O my soul and forget not all his benefits."

To that cry of faith we add our Amen, and we leave him with our Heavenly Father.

## **THE ORGAN**

Many will recall with gratitude the long association which the late Laurence Denham had with St. John's Church. One of his particular interests was in the musical tradition of the church, and especially in the project for the completion of the organ.

It is not surprising therefore, that among his many generous bequests, a sum of money was specified for the inclusion of a 32ft pedal reed stop; which through lack of funds at the time of the 1959-60 rebuild, had to be left for some future occasion.

In the present period of inflationary trends, it will be well understood that the cost of such a stop would now be considerably in excess of the item originally stated in Laurence Denham's will. Moreover, the Vestry has recently been advised by the organ builders that a further \$1200 will now be needed to add this 'Bombarde' stop, and to complete the installation as had been anticipated by the end of the year. It was felt that some of our parishioners might appreciate an opportunity to contribute personally to the added expense of this stop, which will undoubtedly provide a most fitting memorial tribute to one who has given so much spiritually and materially to the church which he and we all love so much.