

**A Celebration of the life of**

**Ray Evans**

**16th May 1927 - 6th September 2017**



**St Mary's Church, Bampton**

**Friday 29th September**

**11:30am**

## Sentences and Prayer

### Hymn: Oh Jesus, I have promised

O Jesus, I have promised  
To serve Thee to the end;  
Be Thou forever near me,  
My Master and my Friend;  
I shall not fear the battle  
If Thou art by my side,  
Nor wander from the pathway  
If Thou wilt be my Guide.

Oh, let me feel Thee near me;  
The world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
The tempting sounds I hear;  
My foes are ever near me,  
Around me and within;  
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,  
And shield my soul from sin.

Oh, let me hear Thee speaking,  
In accents clear and still,  
Above the storms of passion,  
The murmurs of self-will;  
Oh, speak to reassure me,  
To hasten, or control;  
Oh, speak, and make me listen,  
Thou Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised  
To all who follow Thee  
That where Thou art in glory  
There shall Thy servant be;  
And Jesus, I have promised  
To serve Thee to the end;  
Oh, give me grace to follow,  
My Master and my Friend.

Oh, let me see Thy footmarks,  
And in them plant mine own;  
My hope to follow duly  
Is in Thy strength alone.  
Oh, guide me, call me, draw me,  
Uphold me to the end;  
And then to rest receive me,  
My Saviour and my Friend.

### Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:  
he leadeth me in the paths  
of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the  
days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of  
the LORD forever.

### The Lesson: Isaiah 40: 27 to 31

### Address

**Hymn: The day thou gavest Lord, is ended**

The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,  
The darkness falls at Thy behest;  
To Thee our morning hymns ascended,  
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.

We thank Thee that Thy church, unsleeping,  
While earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping,  
And rests not now by day or night.

As o'er each continent and island  
The dawn leads on another day,  
The voice of prayer is never silent,  
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

The sun that bids us rest is waking  
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,  
And hour by hour fresh lips are making  
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.

So be it, Lord; Thy throne shall never,  
Like earth's proud empires, pass away:  
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,  
Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

**Reading: Taken from Quaker Faith & Practice**

**Prayers**

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil,  
for thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory  
for ever and ever.

**Amen**



## Onward Christian Soldiers

Onward, Christian soldiers,  
marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
going on before!  
Christ, the royal Master,  
leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle,  
see his banner go!

### *Refrain:*

*Onward, Christian soldiers,  
marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus  
going on before!*

At the sign of triumph  
Satan's host doth flee;  
On, then, Christian soldiers,  
on to victory!  
Hell's foundations quiver  
at the shout of praise;  
Brothers, lift your voices,  
loud your anthems raise! *[Refrain]*

Like a mighty army  
moves the church of God;  
Brothers, we are treading  
where the saints have trod;  
We are not divided;  
all one body we,  
One in hope and doctrine,  
one in charity. *[Refrain]*

Onward, then, ye people,  
join our happy throng,  
Blend with ours your voices  
in the triumph song;  
Glory, laud, and honor,  
unto Christ the King;  
This thro' countless ages  
men and angels sing. *[Refrain]*



## Royal Corps of Signals Collect:

Almighty God, whose messengers go forth in every age giving light and understanding, grant that we of the Royal Corps of Signals, who speed the word of man to man, may be swift and sure in sending the message of Thy truth into all the World. May we serve Thee faithfully and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, make such success of our soldierly duties on this earth, that we may be found worthy to receive the Crown of Life hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## The Commendation and Blessing



**The Family would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have attended the service today and for the messages of support received. Donations in memory of Ray are welcomed for Sobell House.**

**Following the service, the family wish to invite you to join them for refreshments at The Vines, Burford Rd, Black Bourton, Bampton OX18 2PF**

**Funeral Arrangements by : E Taylor & Son,  
21 Corbett Road, Carterton, OX18 3LG**

## Ray Evans

With the precision and timing that befits an engineer, Ray held out for as long as he could before slipping the ties that bound him to this earth and taking that last great journey to be closer to the God he had, over time, come to know better and in whom he had a real faith.

Ray held on a bit because he loved *this* life - of that there can be no doubt; he loved the people who were close to him and meant so much to him; he loved his various hobbies and interests; he loved this church. Loving so much, and being loved so much, gave him the energy to carry on when illness seemed to close in on him; forecasts of his imminent death were much exaggerated and, frankly, I would not have been surprised if this day and this occasion were still events in the future.

But, as Ray knew very well, and accepted with good grace, we all have to go at some time, young and old, healthy or ailing; and he made it to 90 with a long, full and interesting life behind him, for which we have come together this morning to give our heartfelt thanks

The River Thames provided one important thread in Ray's life for, as he recently remarked, he began it at one end of the river, near its mouth, and finished it here, in its upper valley, while making a journey through several countries in between. One of his ancestors, in fact, was the last of the Thames river postmen, which provides us with another thread - that of *communication*,

which was to have such a significant role in Ray's work and leisure.

When I first met him, Ray was married to the quite formidable Sarah who, as the then Sacristan, ran a pretty tight ship here in St Mary's. Indeed, I had been warned that negotiating Sarah would possibly be a fraught task - which in the event it wasn't. At that time, at least as far as church matters were concerned, Ray kept a fairly low profile, helping when he was asked, and doing so in a friendly, workmanlike way.

I think his friendliness and electrical abilities were well tested when, in all innocence, we asked if he would be able to install a ceiling light in the Vicarage dining room, as it appeared rather too complicated for me. Well, it *was* complicated - even for an expert like Ray, and it took a good deal of his time, energy, and dark mutterings under his breath before a successful outcome was achieved. The light remains in place - and is not coming with us!

I'm glad to say that the experience didn't put him off looking after Vicarage animals when we went on holiday - feeding the cat was fine - not so sure about the rats that Andrew kept for a while, though. And both Ray and Sarah certainly took to our boys and were very generous to them and to us all.

Ray and Sarah first met in Catterick - so a *Northern* thread is woven into this tapestry of Ray's life. They met up again later in the warmer climate of Singapore and eventually married - the

Scottish Catholic and the perhaps rather nominal C of E English southerner. Two strong characters who worked hard to bring up their daughters, Rae and Julie, and give them the love and devotion they needed to grow up and make their own independent way in the world. Ray and Sarah used to have lively discussions about religion, of course - I won't use the word 'argue', although some people might think that was accurate. And when they came to live in Bampton, Ray had regular talks with Father Armishaw - the Catholic priest at the time - who could more than match Ray for forthrightness and gruffness, but who, again like Ray had a genuinely warm heart underneath it all.

The thinking, the questioning, the constant seeking for answers - sometimes to questions which, as Ray came to understand, HAVE no answers, brought him, later on in life to accept that Jesus Christ was a fair enough model by which to live - stick with him, as he said, and you can ignore the rest. He never did give up the questions, though, but he was confirmed in this church and became a very stalwart member of the congregation, even spending some time in the often challenging job of being a Church Warden.

But Ray loved challenges - especially of a practical nature and made several items which enhanced our worship in different ways. Early on in my time here, I asked him to make a large cross which we could put in the chancel and use during Holy Week and Easter. 'So, how big do you want it?' he asked, indicating something around his own height. 'Well, actually, I was thinking



something more like full size, on a big base - otherwise it'll be lost in a space this size. He gave me one of his looks, went away and, of course, produced the fine, massive cross which slots into its grass-covered box - truly a Calvary to rival the original.

Christmas demanded lights - and again the Vicar wanted a star to hang from the chancel arch - and a star duly appeared - that would light up impressively when a church full of excited children and families on Christmas Eve counted to three.

Then, before the days of the hearing loop and the current sound system, Ray rigged up his own set of microphones and amplifiers, and enabled music to be played through the building from a player in the vestry. This was well used during the annual Flower Festival and the Gift Day to provide background music for visitors and it also served to broadcast the chimes of Big Ben at 11 a.m. on Remembrance Sunday, so that anyone waiting in the church could join in with the Parade Service in the Village Square at the appropriate time.

That day was, of course, very special to Ray who really valued his years in the Royal Signals - another major association in his life with *communication*, of course. He loved the reunions with old comrades and was immensely proud of his army service.

When Sarah died in January 1999, after the initial shock and time for grieving, Ray slipped into her role as Sacristan, applying his ingenious mind, army discipline and care for detail to his work.

During this period he also shared his enthusiasm for amateur radio

with the wider community when on several occasions he set up a radio station in the church during the annual fund-raising Ride and Stride event, which brings cyclists and walkers into churches all over the country. Ray clearly loved the whole business and process of this means of communication (a third part of the *communication* thread in his life); and in the prayers I will use one produced by WACRAL, the World Association of Christian radio Amateurs and Listeners, of which Ray was a member.

But then Ray heard the call of the North in his life once more when at an old army comrades reunion he met a lady called Valerie, whose beguiling north-eastern tones worked their charms on the old fellow! The girls tell me that '*Val pursued him ruthlessly*', but I really can't believe he took much pursuing! I hasten to add that Julie also wrote that '*We are delighted to have Val and Stephen as part of the family and Dad enjoyed 17 fulfilled years with her.*' And we all know that Ray adored her.

It soon became obvious to everyone here that something very special was going on, when the occasional trip north became both more frequent and longer-lasting, and when the times in between saw Val coming down to Bampton to stay, too.

For a while, Ray hung on doggedly to his role as Sacristan here - even when absent - and woe betide those who did the job in that absence if things had been moved or, even worse, some new way of doing things had been put in place without his knowledge or permission! The chair in the Lady Chapel was a particular source

of irritation. There are several similar chairs in various parts of the church, but the one in the Lady Chapel - 'Sarah's Chair' had a cross scratched into it and was the only one Ray would allow to be there. So, if it got moved when he was away, he would stomp around crossly until he found it again and put it back in its rightful place.

In time, of course, he had to admit that he could no longer continue to be sacristan at a distance and, after a bit of a struggle, finally allowed others to take over the work free of interference - sorry, I mean free of his regular good advice. But I have to say, it will take some time for his presence to completely leave the Lady Chapel - don't let his books be tidied away in the wrong place and listen out for echoes of his unmistakable responses to the words of the Prayer Book Communion Service!

Ray's zest for life and love and for doing things meant that his body forgot to tell his brain how old he was. Very few people can say they were told in their 90th year to act their age, but Dr Grimwade unsuccessfully tried to remind him of that on several occasions. Indeed when Ray found out he was seriously ill, his first reaction was to say what a nuisance that was going to be, and he was always optimistic that the end could be staved off for a few more years - perhaps. And when it became obvious that those years had contracted into months and then weeks, he still managed to be frustrated that he wouldn't see if Theresa May made a go of things or how Brexit would pan out - politics being yet another of his many interests.

But towards the end, what mattered were the essentials - the simple pleasures like eating fish and chips on a Friday afternoon on the sea front at Hartlepool with his sweetheart, Valerie - something that prompted him to remark that if reincarnation did exist (another question, another debate) - that if it did exist, he would come back as one of the seagulls (appropriate I suppose - fine, handsome birds that are clever, agile of mind, practical in their ability to find food wherever they can and make good of any situation, occasionally a bit of an old nuisance but much loved and utterly indispensable to life beside the sea. )

And so this man of many gifts has laid them down and, as we proclaim throughout this service, he has been welcomed, by the Christ in whom he put his faith, to that place which has been prepared for those whom God loves, where the frustrations of this life are over and where life opens out to embrace endless, unimagined possibilities. We thank God, then for Ray - son, brother, husband, father, uncle, closest of loving companions, colleague, comrade, friend, loyal servant, communicator extraordinary, and we commend him to God's abiding love and care with words from one of Jesus' parables: *Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things I will make you ruler over many things; enter now into the joy of your Lord.* Rest eternal grant to him O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. May he rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.