

Brother David O'Neill FSC 1918-2008

The sermon preached by Fr Vincent Docherty during the Funeral Mass for Br David O'Neill.

In this life, the greatest gift that we can give to each other is the gift of good memories. In this life only memories last and each of us has the capacity to leave a legacy of wonderful memories to our communities, our students, our families and friends.

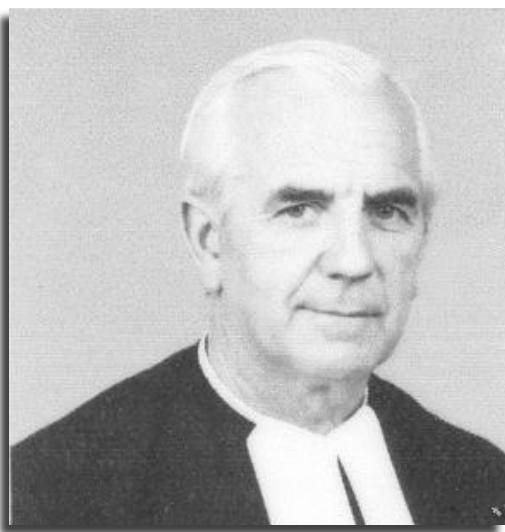
The very young give us memories of days when life was full and sparkling. And it is the very young who remind us of how that first day of eternity shall be.

Those in the prime of life remind us of how fine it is to be vigorous and strong. They remind us of how it feels to really feel good and to be on top of the world as it were. And of how it feels to be busy about doing important things with our lives. The vigorous youth reminds us of how we shall feel on that first and only day of eternity. Those in their last days, those who are very old give us perhaps the most important memory of all. The memory of how one can wait patiently for the coming of the Lord. They remind us, that if only we have patience and do not give up, the Lord will come for us, just as he did for Brother David and take us home on that first and only day of eternity.

All of us here and others elsewhere have good memories of David and these memories will vary depending how well we knew and loved him. For his fellow De La Salle Brothers, teaching colleagues, past pupils, and golfing buddies, some of whom are here today, I am sure not just good, but great memories of a man who lived and cherished all that was and is De La Salle and of a fine, skilled educator and keen sportsman.

For Pauline, Jane, Jennifer, Susan his nieces and Abbey and Kate his grand-nieces, their lives will be peppered with good memories of the deepening of their bonds of friendship.

My own memories of David over a good number of years, were of time spent over breakfasts, with



Brother James taking charge of David's boiled egg, timed exactly to six minutes, of lively conversations on a plethora of subjects and of reminiscing of time spent in novitiates, scholasticates and seminaries, which despite their harshness and perhaps often hardness of heart, did us no harm. However, when he and David began to talk of football and cricket,

I used to say; must we have such deep theological discussion over breakfast! And they would smile. But most of all I remember him for his deep and passionate love for St John's College and his tireless support of all that went on both within and without the College walls. His presence there will be sorely missed.

It is of course good memories that will sustain us and support us as we come to terms with his death.

In our time here on earth, we are supported by Jesus who gives us precious memories of what God is like.

The memories of a God who understands human happiness and who rejoiced to turn water into wine for the wedding feast of a friend.

The memory of a God who understands how you feel when someone says to you 'I am sorry, there is nothing that can be done for you. You must prepare yourself to die', because he heard these words from Pontus Pilate before he was taken out to be crucified.

The memory of a God who understands when any human being cries. 'Oh God let this chalice of suffering pass from me'. Because he cried these very words in the garden of Gethsemane and the suffering did not pass.

The memory of a God who understands when a person cries 'Oh God my God why have you forsaken me?' because He voiced that terrible cry himself just a few hours before he died on the cross.

Indeed Jesus gave us some wonderful memories of God.

The memories of a God who played with children.

The memories of a God who went fishing with his friends and caught nothing.

The memories of a God who forgave a poor sinner when the rest of the crowd wanted to stone her to death.

The memories of a God who healed the sick, the blind, the deaf and the lame.

The memories of a God who wept over the death of his friend Lazarus and the only son of the widow of Naim.

The memories of a God who so desperately wanted to be with human beings that the night before he died, he took bread and wine, blessed them, gave them to his friends saying 'Take and eat, this is my body, this is my blood. Do this in memory of me'.

Jesus gave us all these memories in his lifetime

and then he died. But then he came back to give us the most precious memories of all, the memories of what it is like to live after death.

So, by His death and Resurrection Jesus gives us good memories of what our human life should be like in the here and now and what our life can be in the future.

And so through memories, Jesus gives us the assurance that death is not the extinguishing of the light of life, but merely, putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.

And surely the dawn of the Resurrection has come for Brother David and we here this morning are secure in knowledge and in faith, that he is enjoying in his eternal home, along with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 'All that eyes have not seen and ears have not heard'.

Amen