

John 5:24-27
March 25th, 2017
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Memorial Homily for Betty Barcomb

“King of Glory, King of peace, I will love thee: and the Cream of all my heart, I will bring thee.” [from Hymn 382]

These are the words of my favorite hymn, the lyrics of which were written almost 5 Centuries ago by the great English poet and Anglican priest, George Herbert. The music was authored by a priest friend of mine when I was at General Seminary, by the name of David Walker. It is among the most moving hymns that I have ever heard. We will be singing it together in a few minutes.

It is also Betty Barcomb's favorite. Good taste Betty! The words are as striking as the music and are a tribute to a life lived faithfully in the service of the Lord, a life we have come to celebrate and give thanks for this morning. The words, “And the Cream of all my heart I will bring thee,” strike me as descriptive of this fine Christian we knew and who touched our lives.

I knew Betty for the last six or seven years of her life here at St. George's. That is a small fraction of this special life lived fully, not just as a Sunday Christian, but a seven day a week one, full of life, full of service for others. As George Herbert wrote:

*“Seven whole days, not one in seven,
I will praise thee; in my heart, though not in heaven,
I can raise thee. Small it is, in this poor sort...to enroll thee:*

e'en eternity's too short to extol thee"

I remember her sitting near the front of the church, not too far from the pulpit, and I always remember her sitting there with Fred, her loving husband of over 61 years. I remember her final years here at the church, seeing her helping out in various capacities, and as a treasured vessel of past wisdom and experience to those of us who were "newer" here at St. George's. I remember visiting her in her home. I remember visiting her as her health declined slowly at *Crestfield*. My remaining memories are of her and Fred smiling together as a group of carolers would visit near Christmass each year and sing them Christmas Carols in their room at *Crestfield*. You could feel the joy in Betty's face as she smiled, from listening to the familiar carols and seeing familiar faces sing them. This was her other family from St. George's.

*"Thou hast granted my request, thou hast heard me;
thou didst note my working breast, thou hast spared me."*

Surely God noted Betty working all her life: Betty, like her friend Pat Matrick, was a pillar of this congregation. She is missed. Whether a church fair, preparing apple pies to sell at the fair, caring for our worship space, all were part of her ministry here beyond the pew, and beyond the pew she also welcomed new-comers like me with her easy smile, energy, and enthusiasm.

Who Betty was touched and inspired other members of St. George's, so that when she disappeared from her weekly seat in the pew for her seat in *Crestfield*, they stayed in touch with her, visiting her regularly, one family even bringing over their Thanksgiving dinner with all the fixings and sharing it with her and Fred. How often I walked into their room at *Crestfield*, bursting with the latest news from back home at St. George's, only to discover that they had already heard the news in

greater detail from several members of St. George's, sometimes later the same Sunday afternoon. Wow!

Who knew life passes us by so fast? Betty did. What seems like just a few years ago now, I can see Betty going about St. George's, whether in the pews or parish house. I think we will see her there for some time, as long as we hold her in our hearts.

Who knew life passes us by so fast? Betty lived a full life, a good life, a life blessed and a life she used to bless us with. She took her place as a leader in the school community as a President of the Bolton PTO. She found time to nurture a Den of Cub Scouts and a Troop of Girl Scouts. She worked to help support her family much of her life, and she excelled at both jobs, winning friends and admirers at each. She was a leader in her church community. She was a caregiver to others and to her family. She was faithful and her faith made a difference in her life, right to the completion of her earthly days.

Betty was blessed and she was also a blessing to others. She blessed and gave a faithful witness to her family, Mikey and James, her grandchildren and great grandchildren. And her greatest blessing was her husband and best friend of 61 years, Fred.

In the words of the poet, "*Thou has granted my request, thou hast heard me.*" If I might add here, "thou hast been blessed Betty, and thou hast blessed us plentifully. Now, I pray, you have gone to your rest, and the Peace of the King of Glory is with thee!

AMEN

Hymn Text: [382]

King of glory, King of peace, I will love thee;
and that love may never cease, I will move thee.
Thou hast granted my request, thou hast heard me;
thou didst note my working breast, thou hast spared me.

Wherefore with my utmost art I will sing thee,
and the cream of all my heart I will bring thee.
Though my sins against me cried, thou didst clear me;
and alone, when they replied, thou didst hear me.

Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee;
in my heart, though not in heaven, I can raise thee.
Small it is, in this poor sort to enroll thee:
e'en eternity's too short to extol thee.