

Sr Therese O'Regan,

Family and friends, we are gathered here today on 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept, the birthday of our Foundress, Ven Elizabeth Prout, to bid a fond farewell to our dear Sister Anne Hammersley. For those of you who may not be aware, Elizabeth Prout founded our Congregation 170 years ago working among the poor of Manchester. From the moment Anne heard of Elizabeth Prout she was thrilled to discover that Elizabeth had been working in the same area of Manchester as Anne worked 130 years later. Throughout her religious life, Anne had a great devotion to her, and no doubt has received a warm welcome from her in heaven. During the past couple of years, since her diagnosis, Anne said to me, on a number of occasions; 'You know Therese, if Elizabeth Prout could walk around the streets of Manchester and Sutton with a TB knee, and work until the end, then so can I', and that is what Anne did.

When I think of Anne, I think of words like: life, energy, fun, compassion and kindness. Anne lived her life to the full, and because she was so full of life and energy, she transmitted life to the people she encountered, her family, community, friends and work colleagues. She had a great capacity for creating friendship which lasted. (With us here today are, Margaret Clark, was in primary school with Anne and Anne Dakin who worked in the bank with Anne.) She also had a great capacity for getting friends to help out when things needed to be done, especially here in the Briery, (and Lindsey can testify to that!) Look around this gathering today, and at the hundreds of comments which have come in through social media. Many of those comments have come from past students of Leeds Trinity University, where Anne was an assistant chaplain for a number of years, as well as from many people who have been to the Briery Retreat Centre.

In his letter to the Priests, deacons, Religious and Seminarians, Bishop Marcus Stock expressed his own personal sadness on hearing of Anne's death. To quote from his letter: As you know for many years Sr Anne was the Retreat Director of the Briery Retreat Centre and during the course of her Religious Life and ministry in the Diocese of Leeds, worked as Assistant

Chaplain in Leeds Trinity University, and a vocations guide, worked with the Diocesan Youth Service in Lourdes and was a Trustee of St Gemma's Hospice. Bishop Marcus sends his regrets that he cannot be with us today.

Anne was full of life, but she was also fully human, as anyone who lived or worked with her will know. Like the rest of us she made mistakes but was always quick to acknowledge and learn from her mistakes. She sometimes wanted things done yesterday and may have been a tad impatient when plans did not work out.

She had high expectations of people with whom she worked, as the Staff here in the Briery can testify. However, they also know that if a person had a problem they could go to Anne and be listened to with great compassion, kindness and confidentiality. There was hardly a Leadership Team Meeting of the Province that she did not speak with pride of the Friends and helpers of The Briery.

Anne believed in Teamwork and has been an invaluable member the Province Team for the past eight years. Thanks to Anne, most of our Sisters in the Province are skilled in using Zoom and Facetime. Her patience in teaching us was endless. Anne's commitment to the idea of collaborative government was unwavering. At many of our meetings she would remind the leadership Team that we need to consult the Body, in other words we need to involve the Sisters in making decisions. Anne always gave her point of view and could challenge in an open way, willing to listen and if necessary, change her mind. She would also always be the first to ask for a tea break if a meeting was going on too long!!

Anne's interest extended to the whole Congregation. She was part of the Congregation Communications Team. She really enjoyed connecting with and getting to know our Sisters in South America, the USA, Botswana, Vietnam and Australia. She used her IT skills for everyone's benefit.

Anne was a deeply spiritual women, not in an overt way, but in the way she lived her life. The courage and faith with which she accepted her diagnosis,

and every stage of her illness is an inspiration to all of us. She was full for gratitude for the wonderful treatment she received from the NHS staff in the Airedale hospital and Leeds Oncology department. Anne was also extremely grateful for the help and support she received from the Staff at the Briery and Elmleigh when she and Susan moved to live in the cottage at Elmleigh.

Finally when Anne arrived in St Gemma's Hospice, she could not say enough about the wonderful care she was getting. She phoned me on the Wednesday night before she died and said how happy she was in St Gemma's and that is where she wished to stay until the end. That end came all too quickly for those of us who are left behind; just two days later Anne went to the Lord, very peacefully, in the presence of her niece, Angela, Sisters Susan and Savio.

As Christians, we believe that for Anne life has changed not ended. I think Anne would want to say to each one of us today, in the words of Edward Hays,

*Relatives and Friends, my last breath does not say "goodbye", for my love for you is truly timeless.*

*I leave you a solemn promise, that after I am home with God, I will still be present, whenever and wherever you call on me.*

*My energy will be drawn to you by the magnet of our love.*

*Whenever you are in need, call me.*

*I will come to you, with my arms full of wisdom and light,*

*to open up your blocked paths,*

*to untangle your knots,*

*and to be your avenue to God.*

Anne, until we meet again live in the peace and joy of the Risen Lord.