

In memory of Sylvia Brantingham

8th January 1938 - 31st May 2020

Sylvia was a faithful member, and sometime Churchwarden, of St Pancras Old Church for nearly four decades. Her devotion was an example to many, and her ministry of prayer for those in need and the priests of this parish was outstanding. Sylvia died on the feast of Pentecost, after having received Holy Communion and the Last Rites of the Church. I was by her side as she passed into the loving arms of God. She will be greatly missed, may she rest in peace.

- Fr James

Former Archbishop of York, David Hope, writes:



I first met Sylvia about nine months after my ordination as Bishop of Wakefield when I was attending the General Synod meeting at York. Sylvia was then working in the General Synod office at Church House and was responsible for sorting out and organising the accommodation and other arrangements at the York Synod. At that time the halls of residence at the university were most of them pretty basic. However Sylvia always saw to it that 'her bishops' - the catholic bishops - had as good rooms as could be had! Moreover she worked extremely hard to try to satisfy the

demands of some synod members – totally unreasonable many of them – but always with a good grace and humour. I would often see her at her desk immediately after breakfast and still there often at 10 pm in the evening and beyond. There could have been no more devoted or committed servant of the church as Sylvia. I guess she could have told some interesting stories about certain members – yes and priests and bishops as well ! Yet she was the soul of discretion and utterly trustworthy – a very shrewd judge of character too. I always thought she would have made a good member of the Crown Appointments Commission!

Another memory of her is the many times she came on the pilgrimages I led to the Holy Land, to Turkey, in the footsteps of St Paul and to Romania, the painted monasteries. Sylvia and her friend the 'other Sylvia' were devoted pilgrims much valued for their ready friendship with other pilgrims and even though 'off work' she would always offer to help with any administrative matters – especially useful with a pilgrimage of some three hundred - on one occasion - to the Holy Land !

Beneath all this was a quiet deep and profound commitment to Jesus Christ, her faith as a catholic never shrill or assertive, but lived out and nourished by her unfailing presence at Mass daily and undergirded by regular prayer and devotion especially to Our Lady.

Following her retirement – (I think it was after she retired) she went to do some work in the offices of the Diocese of Europe, obviously attracted by another of 'her bishops' Geoffrey Rowell, where again her administrative and organisational skills were hugely appreciated – not to mention what these days are called her 'people skills'. She needed no training simply because of the person she was in relation to others – sympathetic, generous, welcoming.

Above all I cherish, remember and give thanks for her natural cheerfulness, faith and unfailing trust and hope in the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

+David M Hope.



Sylvia at her desk at General Synod

Sylvia, a servant of the church

Sylvia began her working career in the Church in 1967, in the office of the General Synod. She retired from that position in 1997, having worked under 4 Archbishops of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, Donald Coggin, Robert Runcie and George Carey!.She then worked for the Church Union, located at that time across the road from our Diocesan offices in Westminster. Upon retirement from that job, she went to work for the Diocese of Europe in 2003, finally retiring at the age of 76 in 2014.

Sylvia's Christian devotion was both humble and inspiring. Bron Panter, the Diocese of Europe office manager, knew her well and even recalls getting a bit cross with her as she would quietly disappear to say her midday prayers! I also recall how Sylvia never wasted a moment; in the midst of the busy-ness of answering doors, phone calls, preparing refreshments for visitors and meetings, sorting post, and other general office duties, if she had a spare moment, she would be found at her desk quietly reciting the rosary, in all likelihood with special intention for us all.



Sylvia with her Diocese of Europe colleagues at her retirement party in 2014

Angela Devaney, Churchwarden writes:

When I arrived at St. Pancras for the first time Sylvia welcomed me, stopped for a chat, and made sure I would feel at home there, and thanks to Sylvia I have been there ever since, some 35 years. Until shortly before she died Sylvia was doing the same thing for any newcomer, any solitary person standing alone in a corner, anyone who looked lost. St. Pancras won't be the same without her. She was one of the most deeply Christian people I have known, in that her Catholic faith was the most important thing in her life, it was at the root of everything she did. She was steadfast in her observance: she loved the Mass, and really celebrated each feast day throughout the church year; she just loved to be in Church. We'll never know how many were her acts of kindness and encouragement, especially to children and young people, and the prayers she offered for them; to her prayer was part of the working day.



She was faithful and firm in standing up for her beliefs, and viewed with sadness some recent departures from what she regarded as right and proper within the church; but there was nothing sanctimonious about Sylvia – she loved a good laugh and enjoyed all our parties and festivities - and she was very partial to football and chocolate.

The depth of her faith supported her through a life that had its difficulties; the old fashioned qualities of discipline and fidelity were her strength; in her quiet way she was a shining light.

I feel privileged to have known Sylvia.



The 'Two Sylvias' on pilgrimage in Lourdes



Enjoying an ice cream with friends







Sylvia with friends on the Holy Land Pilgrimage 2018

