

Life everlasting

*On a tomb stone was written the words:
'Remember stranger as you pass by. As you are now so once was I
As I am now so you will be. So prepare yourself to follow me.'
Some wit wrote with chalk down at the bottom: 'To follow you I am quite
content but how do I know which way you went.'*

Well, for believers our signpost is unmistakably pointed in the direction of Heaven. I notice that funeral tributes these days seem more focussed on the earthly life of the departed than their eternal happiness. Praying for the soul of the deceased seems to take second place, if any place at all, to tributes about their previous earthly existence. Of course, the only eulogy that really matters is the one God gives. We all pin our hopes of hearing the words; 'come you blessed of my Father possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. That doesn't mean we don't mention anything at funerals about the earthly life of the deceased – of course not.

To be hesitant about belief in the after-life seemsto go against the deepest longings of the human heart. We rightly recoil at the prospect of total oblivion when we move on. Some people say 'once you're dead your dead.' From a purely rational point of view that just doesn't make sense.

Nature itself proclaims the supremacy of life over death. The great scientist Werner Von Braun wrote: 'Science tells us that nothing in nature, not even the tiniest particle, can disappear without a trace. Nature does not know extinction - all it knows is transformation. He goes on: 'everything that Science has taught me strengthens my belief in the continuity of our existence beyond the grave'. And that's from a renowned scientist.

The changing pattern of the day and the seasons also tell the same story – night giving way to dawn, winter yielding to spring all keep reminding us that, in death, nature is only sleeping – a bit like certain animals hibernating for the winter. But human life transcends that of the animals – we are the cream of God's creation. The bible says: 'we are made in the image and likeness of God'. Bearing this in mind, it would be inconceivable that God would allow us to vanish without a trace when our earthly pilgrimage is over. If that happened, life would be absurd. The inspired word of Scripture and the Creed proclaims loud and clear

that even our bodies which lie in the dust of death will be raised on the last day, those who lived good lives will rise to eternal glory, those who lived bad lives to eternal shame.

The Evil One tries to tempt us away from believing that there is an Eternal Life at all. Some months before she passed away, St Theresa wrote: 'I heard a mocking voice which whispered: 'You dream of a land of light and fragrance. You believe that the Creator will be forever yours. Hope on - look forward to Death. It will give you, not what you hoped for, but a night still darker - the night of utter nothingness'.

November – the month of the Holy souls is a constant reminder that we are mortal beings. But in the world to come death and decay, mourning and sadness will be put behind us – the world of the past will have gone.