

RECTOR'S PINT

We celebrate the 6th Anniversary of our move to the Rectory on September the 23rd. Anyone who has ever been to the Rectory will know that the first to greet you would have been our beautiful Labrador, Dylan. Like it or not, he was there for you with his welcome bark and rather less welcome deposit of fur on your clothes, particularly if you made the mistake of wearing anything dark. It is said of Labradors that they moult only twice a year, once for the first six months and then again for the next six months!

Dylan was very much at the heart of our home; He was a part of the 'package' that we brought here with us when we moved.

Very sadly, he is no longer with us. He was taken ill very suddenly, early one morning at the beginning of August, and had to be rushed to the emergency vet in Woodstock. This was made harder as only the day before I had been diagnosed with a very damaged Achilles tendon and my leg was in plaster pending the fitting of a leg brace the following day. Dylan had a ruptured tumour on his spleen and the only option we had was to have him put to sleep. The whole thing from start to finish took three hours and so it was a huge shock. I am so grateful to the vet that he put all Covid caution aside and allowed us to be with Dylan as he left us.

Some might not understand this, but to lose an animal who has been at the heart of the family home is not a lesser grief, it is very real and very raw. We were helped a little on the Thursday he died, because Cath drove us to Wiltshire to stay overnight so that I could take the wedding of my Goddaughter in Bathampton on Friday. I did this in my leg brace and crutches! It was good to be able to go, a real distraction and a joy and also to be in a place not associated with Dylan. Returning home to the silence of an empty house on Saturday was a horrible experience for us.

Our human relationships with animals are a profound part of who we are. I don't think that you have to be a keeper or guardian of a beloved pet to know this, but those who have had this privilege (and it is a profound privilege) will understand that in that relationship we discover something about unconditional love, acceptance and trust. I think I am the bigger for that and I thank God deeply for the experience, the joy, the fun, and the hope that Dylan brought (as well as the exercise!) Dylan came to us as a gift at a particularly difficult time and he has been with us through some subsequent difficulties as well as good times. Learning to continue without him will be, for a time anyway, a bit tough.

This is a prayer we can use for our animal companions who have died (the author is unknown):

Heavenly Father, Creator of all things, thank you for having entrusted us with such a loyal friend. Thank you for letting this beautiful animal teach us unselfish love. Thank you for the memories we can recall to brighten our days for the rest of our lives. Finally, in gratitude, we return our cherished companion to you. Amen.

Simon