

E te hoa pūmau, e Tamati;   kia au tō moe;    Kia tau te rangimarie ki ā koe.

Sisters and brothers,

When I think of Cardinal Tom's untiring commitment to the work that came his way; when I think of his thoroughness, his efficiency, and that annoyingly tidy desk! When I think of his conscientiousness, and the careful preparation he put into everything, I am left with one impression: Tom gave his all.

So, where does that kind of giving come from? Well, if we hadn't already noticed a connection between this commemoration and what we commemorate in Christmas, the second scripture reading chosen for this Mass certainly makes the connection, because that reading is emphatically about self-giving – starting with God's own self-giving.

In St Paul's own words: "Since God did not spare his son but gave him up to benefit us, after such a gift, is there anything God could refuse us?" Then, referring to the one God sent: "He not only died for us, but rose, and now at God's right hand pleads for us." And then, as if to draw a conclusion from this: "There is absolutely nothing that can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ."

In other words: the meaning, dignity and worthwhileness of our own lives has its origin in the gratuitous giving of a God – who never even needed to create us in the first place – and the self-giving love revealed in the Person and the ministry of Jesus.

During Advent, we allowed ourselves to journey with the Old Testament prophets who visualised us walking "in darkness and a land of deep shadow", but who have "now seen a great light". Their symbolic language is about us emerging *from* not knowing God's purposes and the meaning of our own lives, *to* now knowing, and being overwhelmed by how much we are loved.

Pope St John Paul II put it cogently: (note his first two words) "deep amazement at the worth and dignity of the human person is another name for the Gospel."

Cardinal Tom's own self-giving, expressed in the details of his work, derived from that awareness of God's self-giving which reveals how much we mean to God.

His commitment to social justice is well known. It would have made complete sense to him to read Pope Benedict XVI's teaching that gratuitous giving, forgiving and compassion need to be brought even into trading relationships, business practices and industrial life – in that way pre-empting the imbalances and inequities that otherwise need to be redressed afterwards, in various forms of re-distribution. That's because love for others, modelled on God's love for us, is compassionate and forgiving, and capable of transforming all human relationships. It is also a circuit-breaker where otherwise tit-for-tat and getting even are as far as we could ever go.

In other words: Tom knew that lives which originate from the gratuitous gift and self-giving of God can be true to themselves only through their own self-giving, and being there for others. That is the unfinished work of the gospel; that is what Tom gave his life for, and that is what he would challenge us to continue.

So, now, let us give thanks to God for Cardinal Tom's life. But we don't stop there: in line with our ancient tradition, we also ask God to give him a merciful judgment. Eternal rest grant ....