

Thank You Speech for John

Good afternoon, could I have your attention please.

One of you, and you know who you are, thought it would be a good idea to ask someone to say a few words to mark this occasion, and for some reason they asked me! So I can only be held partly responsible for what follows!

We are of course gathered to say a heartfelt thank you to John, who has given so much to our community and its spiritual life over the past 10 years.

John, you have been a steady presence in our lives. Through baptisms, weddings, funerals, Sunday services, and countless conversations over cups of tea or coffee and of course cake. You have shown us all what it means to serve faithfully, with care, humility, and quiet strength.

We will remember your thoughtful sermons, your wise guidance, and the way you made time for people—especially when it mattered most. And of course, we will not forget your unwavering support for Newcastle United! How fitting that they should mark the year of your retirement with one of their best seasons ever. For those of you who haven't heard, Newcastle finished fifth in the Premier League this season and so secured a spot in next season's Champion's League.

During your time with us, you experienced the tragedy and pain of the untimely deaths of Priscilla and Debbie. Your quiet courage and resolute faith in the face of such sorrow is truly inspirational.

Given John's calling to the ministry you will not be surprised to hear that I have scoured the bible for a suitable text to use to mark his retirement. When I say scoured, this was in fact a quick search on Google. I am confident that many, if not all, of you will be familiar with the apostle Paul's writings in the 2nd book of Timothy chapter 4 verse 7, where he says:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

John, this verse seems particularly fitting as we gather to celebrate and mark the end of your ministerial career. I understand that this text is often used at funerals, so I should stress that we wish you a long and healthy retirement.

John, thank you so much for your service, your strength, your humour, and your love and care for us all over the past 10 years. You have made a real difference to the life of our community in so many positive ways. We are so grateful to you for the time we have shared with you. A lasting legacy of your ministry in North Warwickshire is the fact that when you arrived we were a group of three parishes and you leave us as one united parish.

We wish you peace, rest, and joy in your retirement. You will be fondly remembered by all of us.

I will end with one of my favourite Irish blessings and one of my favourite quotations both of which seem fitting for this occasion:

Doug Hammarskjold, the second Director General of the United Nations, wrote:

'For all that has been, thanks.

For all that shall be, yes.'

And given John's propensity for walking the blessing is:

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

(legacy of one parish)