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Farewell: Funeral of inspirational St Peter's head teacher Laurence Montagu

Thousands at funeral of St Peter's head Laurence Montagu

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THOUSANDS of people crammed into Gloucester Cathedral yesterday to celebrate the life of much-loved St Peter's High School head teacher Laurence Montagu.

Family, friends, colleagues, students and former pupils filled the city landmark to bursting point as they said their final farewell.



QUEUES: Mourners arrive at Gloucester Cathedral

Queues stretched around the Cathedral car park and as far as College Court, but it was standing room only for hundreds.



TRIBUTES: Floral arrangements to Lawrence Montagu



INSPIRATION: St Peter's head teacher Lawrence Montagu.

Mr Montagu OBE, originally from Merseyside, died on Friday April 5 at the age of 67 after a long illness. He had been head teacher at the Stroud Road school for 29 years.

His immense popularity across the city and beyond was epitomised yesterday with one of the largest attendances the Cathedral has ever played host to.

The Requiem Mass was led by Canon Liam Slattery, of St Peter's Church in London Road, and there were readings by friends, colleagues and Mr Montagu's son Keiran, who also works at the school.

"I often got asked what it was like to be the son of the head teacher," said Keiran, who also went to the school as a child. Well, at times it was embarrassing, particularly when your dad dances in front of everyone at the school.

"He had an unbelievable talent for finding common ground with people, whatever they did or whoever they were.

"It was this ability that allowed him to see the potential in everybody."

He said: "Dad's relationship with mum was unbreakable. They were the best of friends and a real team.

"Dad said he had only been able to do what he had done because of mum. We have been very lucky to have such incredible parents.

"I had never seen dad look so proud about anything than when he held his grandson Theo."

Kieran finished his emotional tribute by delving into Mr Montagu's love of football.

He said: "He has been an inspiration to many.

"But I am sorry Mr Mourinho, but we have the special one, and although he's an Everton fan, he will never walk alone."

Spontaneous applause erupted throughout the Cathedral afterwards and tears flowed freely.

Mr Montagu's friend Michael Dillon then recalled childhood tales of drinking Guinness for the first time and falling asleep as a result.

He said: "He was full of love, full of hope, and full of affection. He was a beacon of goodness and strength. Thank you for being our friend."

Hymns Shine Jesus Shine, The Servant King, As The Deer and Do Not Be Afraid were sung, while readings and prayers punctuated the music throughout the mass.

Mr Slattery also read a tribute. He said: "The family would like to say they are overwhelmed by the number of people here today.

"Larry saw the potential that was in his family, his children, his pupils and his friends. He sought always to enable the potential to be fulfilled."

As part of the service, items were taken to the altar. They included an Everton and Liverpool scarf, the St Peter's banner, the St Rose's School banner (where Mr Montagu was a governor) and an England rugby shirt, handed over by former St Peter's pupil and Gloucester and England rugby player, Charlie Sharples.

Donations were given at the service towards The Lawrence Montagu Foundation, which will provide a lasting legacy.