

February 11, 2017

The Requiem Eucharist to Celebrate John W. Hayden's Life

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Lamentation 3: 22-26, 31, 33, Psalm 104: 25-37, 2 Corinthian 4:16-5:9, John 14: 1-7

Last Sunday after 10:30 a.m. service we were downstairs sipping coffee and enjoying our gathering. Chip Hayden came to tell us his father had just died. A hush fell over that large room as we realized our parish had lost a dear and faithful parishioner. I heard Dr. Sig Gundersen say: "He was a Phenomenal Man."

Melissa, Chip, Sarah, John and Chris, there is no doubt your father was a phenomenal man. He was a beloved husband to to your mother, Phyllis, for 65 years. He was a loving father and physician with healing hands ... A naval officer, musician, hunter, master carpenter, photographer and artist. He loved nature, and he especially enjoyed bird-watching. His favorite book, which he kept by his bed, was *The Outermost House* by naturalist and philosopher Henry Breston. His daughter, Sarah, will share his observation of birds on the ocean. His son, John, read Psalm 104, which John marked in his Bible and often read.

"O Lord how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures."

John knew animals and birds praise their maker in a language humans wouldn't normally understand. In nature, he experienced the majesty and awesome glory where the animal kingdom and humans come together. The whole creation offers praise with the psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. Alleluia!

Yes, this is our moment to thank God with Alleluias for a life well lived. We gather here to celebrate John's life. He belonged to what Tom Brokaw called "*The Greatest Generation.*" Brokaw wrote:

"The young Americans of this time constituted a generation marked for greatness...It is a generation that, by and large, made no demands of homage from those who followed them and who prospered economically, politically, and culturally because of its sacrifices. It is a generation of

towering achievement and modest demeanor, a legacy of their formative years when they were participants in and witness to sacrifices of the highest order." (Brokaw, p.11) "Towering achievement and modest demeanor" - that was John Hayden.

John was a man of deep faith. He understood that, as wonderful as this life was for him, there is an extra dimension—God’s dimension - which is eternal and surrounds us all. He worshiped here with Phyllis and his family as a faithful member for 59 years. After pilgrimage of 94 years on earth, John has entered into eternity with his deep faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For those who die in faith in the risen Christ, before that final reawakening, the central promise is of being “with Jesus” at once. “My desire is to depart,” wrote St. Paul, “and be with Christ, which is for better”(Philippians 1:23).

Jesus said, “I go and prepare a place for you, ... so that where I am, there you may be also.” As a faithful disciple through worship, prayer, and hope in the resurrection, Sunday after Sunday, John had a foretaste of the blissful life he has now in Christ. Each time he received the Sacrament of Holy Communion he received the medicine of immortality. Now he is embraced in the glory of God and lit with the celestial light of Christ. With Phyllis, the love of his life, John will dwell in eternity. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3: 22).

Jesus promised his disciples that though he must leave them, it would be for their benefit. They would not be forgotten or abandoned. Across the millennia, his message comforts us as well, bringing hope in place of despair. This hope is not grounded in our frail nature, but in all we have learned of the nature of God and his resurrected Son Jesus Christ.

The Gospel proclaims God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Luke 20:38). When Christians die, they die “in Christ.” Since death is defeated they are thus “brought home to the Father and to that eternal life which is Christ’s gift and promise.” With this hope in eternity we entrust our brother, John, into God’s

hands. The old order has passed away. In heaven there will be no sorrow, no weeping or pain, but the fullness of peace and joy with Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

John, you are now with God. I believe you have become part of His glory. Your soul is like a returned favor. You are a star in his sky and a warm feeling in our hearts. May God keep you; may he and his angels sing to you, and you to them in that place where music never ends.

Good-bye, my friend. Greet us at heaven's door. Your smile and warm hand shake will make it feel like home.

As we celebrate your new life, we pray:

May Christ give you rest in the land of the living
And open for you the gates of paradise;
May he receive you as a citizen of the Kingdom,
For you were his friend.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

George Carey, *Canterbury Letters to the Future*, Kingsway Publications, 1998,
p.226

Mitch Albom, *have a little faith*, Hyperion, 2009, Pp. 242-247.