

Reading I Isaiah 58:7-10

Thus says the LORD: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.

Responsorial Psalm 23

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

God is my shepherd, so nothing I shall want, I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love, I walk by the quiet waters of peace.

Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul, you lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth, my spirit shall sing the music of your Name.

Though I should wander the valley of death, I fear no evil, for you are at my side, your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope.

You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred, crowning me with love beyond my power to hold.

Surely your kindness and mercy follow me all the days of my life; I will dwell in the house of my God forevermore.

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Words and Music by Marty Haugen

Reading II Ephesians 4:1-6

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

GOSPEL Mark 5:1-12

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

There are few things in our lives that will challenge and overwhelm our faith like death does. Yet, the Scriptures and music chosen for Bill today lift us up; they are all about God's boundless love and our future of hope. Intellectually we know death is the fate of all of us. But, we think we have more time. When it strikes, even when we think we are prepared, it can crush us with sadness. Grief is the most solitary emotion I think we will ever have ...it makes islands of us all. Even Jesus wept. We humans are helpless to rise up out of the death that afflicts us. It looks like death won. But in today's Psalm we prayed with Bill: "*Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.*" For this very reason, we need to reflect on God loving us so much that He alone transforms death into life.

Today, we have been called to console each other ...to remind each other that we are not here to mourn without hope. God loves us so much that in Isaiah the Lord promised: "*...you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!*" But how do we know that this is true and not just some words to make us feel better? How can we truly be consoled and confident that that Bill is with Jesus? Today, Bill 's own words will help us understand.

You see, I think the answer and evidence is that our faith in God does not rest on proof of what we see today...it rests in our hearts with what we know is true. I believe everyone who met Bill Monahan or heard his homilies ended up being touched by him. We knew him to live as Ephesians said, "*live in a manner worthy of the call he had received...with humility and gentleness...with patience...with love*" as a husband, as a father, grandfather, brother, as a Deacon, and as a man. I saw it countless times over the 26 years I have known Bill...since when we first met in the year 2000 during the founding days of St. Brendan the Navigator in Cumming. Deacon Bill had recently joined the staff with Father Willie and bookkeeper Bea Ollinger. I had just moved back to Atlanta and was in formation to become a Deacon. Bill became my mentor...and he never stopped mentoring me. You see he gifted me copies of his final 170 homilies spanning 17 years which I found to be a treasure trove of his life as well as his ministry. Bill was an extraordinary Deacon and preacher who even before his ordination in

1991 would always connect with people through his passionate concern for others and by sharing his lived experiences. Please look at the back of today's program...it explains you can access Bill's homily archive from the website billmonahan.com that his children created. I recommend you dabble in reading some of these from time to time for Bill's insights on an upcoming Sunday, or maybe a wedding or funeral of someone you know. I think you will be fascinated with Bill's "open-book" way of sharing.

Bill's "goodbye homily" to St. Brendan's in September 2012 explained a lot about his life and his ministry...both were dedicated to serving others. He said:

"BECAUSE WE HAD NO CHURCH building, FR. WILLIE OR I WOULD GO TO PARISHONERS HOMES TO CELEBRATE BAPTISMS AROUND THE KITCHEN OR dining ROOM TABLE...THE FIRST CATHECIST TRAINING SESSIONS WERE HELD IN OUR BASEMENT FAMILY ROOM WHERE WE PUSHED ALL THE FURNITURE TO THE WALLS AND FILLED UP 55 FOLDING CHAIRS WITH NEW CATHECIST VOLUNTEERS"...

Bill shared that he had just retired as Deacon but then explained that "retirement" meant he would have more time with family...and then, straight-faced, he said he'd also have time for a few outreach ministries including ones at IGNATIUS HOUSE, and as a Catholic Relief Services Global Fellow preacher, and with St. Brendan's HAITIREACH ministry, and being a part-time Deacon here at the Catholic Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Bill and Marian loved the Shrine's commitment as he said:

to "INCLUSIVENESS, WONDERFUL LITURGIES AND EXTENSIVE OUTREACH TO THE INNER-CITY POOR."

They understood the importance of proximity to the poor. So today we celebrate Bill and Marian's numerous shared-ministry experiences to those in need. And now we know why so many people around the archdiocese knew them both so well!

Bill's homilies would often tell us touching details of his family and included his ever-present wisdom. Once he shared details of meals during a trip to New England to visit family and friends when he said:

“ONLY ONCE DURING THOSE FIVE DAYS DID WE RECEIVE “EUCCHARIST” AT CHURCH BUT IT SEEMED THAT IN SOME WAY, AT EACH ONE OF THOSE MEALS, WE SHARED EUCCHARIST WITH EACH OTHER.”

Another homily also caught my attention when he said:

“A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO, we were SITTING AT THE DINNER TABLE AND I MENTIONED THAT I NEEDED TO START PREPARING MY HOMILY FOR THAT WEEKEND. MY SON DAN WHO WAS PROBABLY 10 AT THE TIME SAID, “DAD LET ME GIVE YOU THREE TIPS ON WHAT’S IMPORTANT WHEN YOU PREACH,
1ST. TELL A LOT OF JOKES-EVERYONE LIKES THAT
2ND. DON’T BE BORING
3RD. AND THIS IS MOST IMPORTANT...BE SHORT...NO LONGER THAN 5-7 MINUTES.”

Dan, I always wondered who counseled him on his preaching! You can be proud that your Dad once preached: *“A MARRIED COUPLE SHOULD NEVER YELL AT EACH ANOTHER... UNLESS THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE!...”*

Bill absolutely loved mentoring and preparing engaged couples for marriage, and couples married outside the Church who wanted to have their marriage convalidated in the Church....and he often served or presided at their wedding and always sent them off with a special homily...then years later he treasured baptizing their babies!! You will need to read Bill's "Beatitudes of Marriage" on billmonahan.com. Reflecting on today's Gospel Beatitudes from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, Bill wrote some special words for us all:

“HAVING A GOOD MARRIAGE TODAY IS A GREAT CHALLENGE. A GOOD MARRIAGE DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN; IT HAS TO BE WORKED AT EACH DAY. IT REQUIRES THAT A COUPLE BECOME VULNERABLE TO EACH OTHER IN LOVE

Bill Monahan Funeral Homily by Deacon Roger Fraser

AND BE FULLY COMMITTED TO MAKING THEIR MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP THE BEST IT CAN BE. ON MAY 29, 2011 MY WIFE MARIAN AND I CELEBRATED OUR 40TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. [that makes it 55 this year] LIKE OTHER LONG-MARRIED COUPLES, WE HAVE EXPERIENCED MUCH GOOD BUT ALSO SOME DIFFICULTY DURING THAT TIME. I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE THINGS THAT WE BELIEVE ARE IMPORTANT TO HAVING A GOOD MARRIAGE. IT IS MY BEATITUDES FOR MARRIAGE BECAUSE IF YOU FOLLOW WHAT I HAVE TO SAY YOU WILL EXPERIENCE BLESSINGS IN YOUR LIFE TOGETHER AS A COUPLE."

Bill would frequently mention in his homilies people who were suffering...like when he said:

"...with PROBLEMS IN OUR MARRIAGE OR FAMILY, DIFFICULTIES IN OR LOSS OF OUR JOB, DEALING WITH SERIOUS ILLNESS, FEAR ABOUT LIFE, or WITH ALL THAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD. MAYBE IT'S AN ADDICTION OR SOME SIN WE CAN'T SEEM TO OVERCOME BY OUR OWN EFFORTS."

I knew Bill always preached from the depths of his personal experience. He would demonstrate how to face our difficulties and challenges. But, I also wondered how he was able to share these intimate experiences in his homilies until I read his homily for the Epiphany in 2002 where he openly explained how he could do this:

"I'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU MY OWN RECENT EXPERIENCE OF AN EPIPHANY....I WAS COMING BACK FROM A BUSINESS TRIP...I KNEW I WAS SUPPOSED TO PREACH THAT WEEKEND BUT I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I HAD THE EMOTIONAL OR SPIRITUAL STRENGTH TO DO SO....DURING MY TEN YEARS AS A DEACON, PROBABLY BECAUSE I AM MORE OF AN INTROVERT, I HAVE SOMETIMES FOUND IT TO BE A BIT STRESSFUL AND INTIMIDATING TO GET UP IN FRONT OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE TO SPEAK, EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE HAD TOLD ME OFTEN THAT THEY COULD RELATE TO WHAT I HAD SPOKEN ABOUT. NOW I ALSO FELT OVERWHELMED.... I REALIZED THAT I WAS AT A POINT OF

CRISIS, AT A CROSSROADS, AND WHAT I NEEDED WAS TO SEEK GOD'S HEALING PRESENCE AND PEACE IN MY LIFE IN THE MIDST OF MY ANXIETY. STEPPING OUT IN FAITH, I FOUND SOMEONE THAT I COULD TALK WITH ABOUT THESE THINGS"...Bill went on a retreat hosted by Father Matthew Linn, a Jesuit who focuses on integrating physical, emotional, and spiritual healing... Bill said, *"I CAME AWAY FROM THIS EXPERIENCE FEELING RENEWED, AFFIRMED AND LOVED BY GOD. IT REMINDED ME THAT OUR GOD IS A PERSONAL GOD WHO CARES ABOUT ME, JUST AS HE CARES ABOUT EACH ONE OF YOU... OFTEN IT'S IN THE ORDINARY EVENTS OF OUR DAILY LIFE, maybe IN THE MIDST OF A SERIOUS ILLNESS OR CRISIS, OR even WHILE WE QUIET OURSELVES ON A RETREAT. IF WE ARE OPEN, WE WILL ENCOUNTER GOD BECAUSE GOD IS ALWAYS SEEKING TO ENCOUNTER US....MOMENTS OF EPIPHANY LEAD US TO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS OF GOD, OF OURSELVES, AND OF THE WORLD THAT WE ARE ALL PART OF. THEY CAN UNLOCK OUR DREAMS, GIVE US A NEW SENSE OF VISION AND PURPOSE, AND OFFER US A SENSE OF DIRECTION AND MEANING FOR OUR LIFE'S JOURNEY."*

All I can say is Wow!... *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

You know I never heard Bill complain about his Parkinson's, and in fact I found only one homily where he directly mentioned his Parkinson's...it was in 2017. Once again, he shared some loving experiences with Marian, and his wisdom:

"ST. PAUL SAYS THAT BECAUSE WE ARE GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, WE SHOULD PUT ON SINCERE COMPASSION, A WORD THAT MEANS TO PUT OUR LOVE INTO ACTION BY CONCERN AND CARE FOR THE WELL BEING OF OTHERS, TO BE THERE FOR ONE ANOTHER ESPECIALLY IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY...AS Marian and I MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AND STRUGGLE THROUGH MY PARKINSON'S TOGETHER, MARIAN REMINDS ME THAT OVER OUR MANY YEARS TOGETHER, WE HAVE BEEN THERE FOR each OTHER DURING many DIFFICULT TIMES. IT

Bill Monahan Funeral Homily by Deacon Roger Fraser
*HAS BROUGHT A REAL SENSE OF STRENGTH TO OUR RELATIONSHIP AND A
SENSE OF BEING LOVED AND SUPPORTED.”*

[“Rain Down” music softly starts playing]

Today’s readings were given to us so that we will make a choice...so that we will choose God’s Love and Life! As Bill once preached:

“JESUS PROMISES US THAT THERE IS RESURRECTION AND ETERNAL LIFE, AND THAT THERE IS LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE BECAUSE GOD’S LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH. EACH WEEK AT MASS WE PRAY THE CREED AND PROFESS OUR BELIEF IN “THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME.” THE WORDS COME EASILY, BUT I WONDER HOW OFTEN WE GIVE MUCH THOUGHT TO THEIR MEANING. IF YOU ARE LIKE ME, IT PROBABLY ONLY HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH A SITUATION WHERE OUR BELIEF IN THAT LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME BECOMES PERSONAL AND CHALLENGING, like WHEN WE AGE, or when we BURY A LOVED ONE, OR FACE A TERMINAL ILLNESS. NONE OF US WILL KNOW FOR CERTAIN IN THIS LIFE WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE DIE...But, JESUS PROMISES US THAT OUR GOD IS NOT GOD OF THE DEAD BUT God OF THE LIVING. HE KNOWS AND WE BELIEVE THAT ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD IS A REALITY. WE HAVE NO REASON TO FEAR DEATH BECAUSE GOD’S LOVE FOR US never ends.”

If we live and die in that belief, then Bill you may be gone from here, but you will never be forgotten....you are among those we pray with daily...when we live and die in the belief that we come to life in the love of Jesus Christ, nothing Bill of your goodness and grace will be lost and forgotten in a grave somewhere. Because of you Bill, we will never forget that God loves us so much that He alone transforms death into life. Death did not win!

And so, we say with great love...Bill, your legacy of Love and Life will live on, we promise!

My Dear Bill, Rest in Peace...Live in Peace! We’ll see you on the other side!

And the Church says, AMEN! ...Alleluia!

[choir sings refrain from “Rain Down”]