

Keep Your Fork

[Revelation 7:9-17, Matthew 5:1-12](#)

A woman called her pastor to her hospital bedside. She was dying and knew she did not have much time left. She had already talked with her family about funeral arrangements, what dress she wanted to wear for burial, etc. However, she wanted a small surprise for her family. She requested to be placed in her coffin and buried with a fork in her right hand. The woman did indeed pass on that night. All throughout the viewings and family gatherings, there was a great deal of discussion about the fork in mother's hand. Why of all things would she have requested that? All was made clear at the funeral service.

The pastor began with traditional readings and the woman's favorite songs. He talked about her love of God and family and all the good works she had done while on earth. He then addressed the woman's strange request. "Mary made a special

request to be buried holding a fork in her right hand. I'm sure you are all wondering why. She told me that over her lifetime she had attended many church suppers. Every time, she thoroughly enjoyed the meal, even during the lean years when the fare wasn't very elaborate. After the main course and without fail, someone would always turn to her and say, 'keep your fork.' That was her clue that no matter how delicious and wonderful the meal was, something even better was still to come with dessert. So Mary requested to be buried with a fork in her hand as a message to all of you. No matter how wonderful her life was while she was on earth, sharing joys and tears with her family and friends, she knew there was something better waiting for her in heaven. In her words she wanted you all to know she kept her fork.

Today is All Saints Sunday in the Christian calendar. We come together to remember all those who have passed on this year. As those left behind we grieve. We miss those that we will never see in this life again. And yet, in the midst of our grief we can rejoice for the scripture says ‘Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.’ Each of us has a purpose while on this earth. As Christ’s believers we are here to share God’s love with everyone. We are here to comfort and lift up each other in times of trial. We are here to bring peace, show mercy, visit the poor in spirit, and feed the hungry. We are called to be like Christ.

Sometimes it’s easy to forget our heavenly reward. We forget that in the midst of our busyness and struggles, there is a better life waiting for us. We sang the song earlier – “Some glad morning when this life is o’er, I’ll fly away.” We don’t have to

worry about the end of our lives because we have been given the gift of eternal life. We are God's children, and as such we will one day worship at the throne of God with all the saints that have gone before us. I can only imagine what an awesome sight that will be.

Let us also not forget that while we are here we have things to do. We are busy people, but we have to remember to not get caught up in our own world so much so that we forget others around us. We have civic duties, family duties, work duties – many things vying for our time and energy. Can we put God above all that? Can we rise above the din of daily life and commune with our maker?

The Catholic Church is celebrating this year as the year of Saint Paul. When we look at Paul's life and his work, we could easily think 'Wow, I could never do all he did for God.' Paul

was to first to remind everyone that he was the chief of sinners but heard the voice of Jesus Christ and chose to follow God and witness to the ends of the earth. Every day we are witnesses to God's love in all we do. Paul was the first to recognize that he could not have spread the gospel so effectively and to such a diverse area without the help of others. We are here to help each other and to reach out to a community that no longer sees the need for God. There is an entire generation that sees God and worship as something else to fit into a busy schedule. Yet God wants us to put God first. God does not want to be an afterthought. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

We talked last week about launching into uncharted territory. Many of us had the benefit of a Christian upbringing and we can take that grounding with us as a firm foundation for

sharing the love of God with our neighbors. If you didn't have a Christian upbringing I hope you are now getting that same grounding in order to be an effective witness of God's love and mercy in your life. We remember the past and bring it with us into our present lives. We honor those that have gone before us and await us in heaven. We bring that hope into our present as well. This is a joyous day as we remember and are thankful for the lives of those that have touched us and strengthened us on our faith journey. May we be a witness to the next generations and provide that same hope and encouragement to all who cross our paths. And when the time comes for each of us to pass on from this life remember, 'Keep your fork.' Amen.