

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
Memorial Service for Bob Moulinier
December 17, 2016
The. Rev. Grayce O'Neill Rowe

Episcopal priest, John Claypool, tells the story of a man he visited when this man was near death. As many of you gathered here today know from personal experience, Claypool's visit included a conversation about what it would be like to die. The dying man said that he realized, now that he was getting really close, that death is simply an old friend in new garb. All of his life he had had the experience of having to let go of things that had served their purpose so that he might be able to have access to new experiences. He spoke of what it was like when he first started school at the age of six, about the same age as I imagine Bob was in the sweet photo that is in your bulletin. The dying man said that he did not know much about what the word school meant - this was way before preschools and kindergartens. On the day that he was starting school, as he dressed he looked out the window onto the backyard. He saw his swing, he saw his sandbox, and he wished that he could just stay there and not start school. This was his world and he was familiar with it. As you might expect, he did go on to school that day and found that it was a place where he would grow and develop in many ways that never would have happened if he had stayed in his backyard. Six years later he faced another change, this time into that frightening place called Junior High and then after that into High school. With each transition there was fear only to be followed by the realization that with each transition came growth and development. This man learned that every exit is also an entrance. You never walk out of one thing without walking into something else. So, too, with death, a familiar friend in new garb, an exit and an entrance.

As Christians we believe that physical death is not the end. We believe that it is a transition, it is an exit from life in this world and an entrance to life in God's eternal kingdom. It is an entrance into life among the communion of saints. Death is a transition to a new life filled with continued growth and development. It is, in fact, a familiar friend in new garb.

We believe that this is true for Bob. His death is a transition, an exit from life as he knew it, an exit from life that had become filled with excruciating

pain, and an entrance into a new and wonderful life, an entrance into the splendor that has been promised to him, an entrance into the splendor that has been promised to each of us.

Bob has gone on to his promised dwelling place. And from what I have been told about Bob, what many of you know, Bob has gone on to his promised dwelling place and he is no doubt already busy at work, no idle time for him. I had to chuckle when I heard that Bob believed that heaven would be segregated between those who work and those who don't work. Bob would most certainly be with those who work. Bob was a hard worker and his concept of heaven was that he would be busy at work once he got there. For Bob certainly lived a life of work. Even after he was diagnosed with cancer this second time, he wanted to get out of the hospital in order to go to work, he had jobs to finish.

When Bob was young, well, it took him a few turns before he got headed in the right direction. After a bit of trouble he found himself in a boy's school and it was there that he met a priest who in a sense saved his life. The priest made a deal with him. If Bob would set goals, get his GED, and, let's see, what was that, oh yes, if Bob would build a car, the priest would see that Bob would be able to finish his time at the school earlier than planned. Bob did this, he set goals, he got his GED, and amazingly he built a car, a car that received some notoriety in Bob's world, a car that was known as Ditchy Mo Dibble. Hmmm. Bob's time at that school and with the guidance of that priest started him on a path that would take him to California, to Nevada, to Washington DC and eventually back to Arizona. This time at the school was an exit from life headed in the wrong direction and an entrance into a life where Bob became known for his exceptional workmanship and his great work ethic. Bob never started a job he could not finish.

Bob was also a brave man, he married Deirdre after all. As she told me, it took a brave man to marry a wild woman like her. And marry her he did, another exit and another entrance. In marrying this wild woman he carried his tremendous work ethic with him into his marriage by supporting his beloved wife emotionally, spiritually, physically. This love and support encouraged Deirdre to pursue ordination as a Deacon. This amazing couple became known as the Biker and the Deacon - did I mention that Bob loved his motorcycle?

Bob also gave his love and support to his beautiful daughters, Melissa and Liana, and their children, Emily, Josie, Ella, Zane and Beau. He loved and supported Deirdre's son, Andrew, and Andrew's beautiful family, Sarah, Ruby and June. Bob was a dedicated and brave man who shared all that he had with his family and with the many people who worked with him over the years.

Bob will be greatly missed. Bob died much too early, It is right to grieve his death as he leaves a huge hole in our lives. Yet, as our Christian faith tells us, he lives on. He has simply exited into a new entrance, a new life. We won't have the same tangible relationship with him, but this quiet yet powerful man will live on in the stories that you share, he will live on each time that you feel overwhelmed by life's challenges and you stop to remember that a challenge is an opportunity to do what your husband, what your father, what your grandfather, what your friend always did - get busy working and it will work out. When faced with what feels like an ending, remember that it is really a familiar friend in new garb, it is a new entrance, a new beginning.

Today we are called by God to live by faith the words that Jesus spoke, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." We are called by God to trust, not in a scientific, certain way, but we are called by God to trust through our hearts. Today, as we celebrate Bob, as we cry and as we laugh, as we openly express our grief and as we shout with joy, today, because of the promise and the love that God has for each of us, remembering that each exit is really a new beginning, today through our faith alone we are able to say "yet even at the grave we are able to make our song: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Amen.

We are an Easter people. We are a people of faith. We celebrate the fact that our liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy, it is a celebration of the resurrection. And so, we can celebrate the knowledge that Barbara lives on in God's dwelling place. We can celebrate the belief that Barbara lives on in intimate relationship with God. We can celebrate. However, we are still in the process of living, we are the ones who are left behind without the tangible, everyday presence of someone we loved. Knowledge of Barbara's peace is wonderful, the reality of our loss is difficult. And so, Jesus comes to each of us and says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

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Our faith tells us that Bob has gone through this exit into a new and wonderful entrance. Our faith tells us that he will live on in inner memories and that he will live on in God's eternal kingdom. And because our faith tells us these things, at his death we can, even now, at her death, with great excitement we can shout Alleluia! Alleluia!