

## SERMON for Bud Pazur

Written and delivered by Fr. Paul Fliss on 18 Jan 2024, SS. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Over the past few weeks of talking with Denise and learning about Bud and his life, he really was a remarkable man. *Very* intelligent. And he was able, it seems, he was able to take both sides of his brain—the left side and the right side—one being scientific, and excel in that area of his life, but then also the other side of creativity and music and poetry, that other side of the brain. He was equally accomplished in that.

And so he was remarkable in being able to, within his personality, use both directions—of his mind and of his heart and of his spirit—use every part of himself to see the world and to experience the world, to make sense of the world and to celebrate the world.

The difficulty sometimes for people who have this wonderful gift and talent, is that as they seek the wonderful possibilities that are in the world, that life can sometimes take a little piece of you as you have experiences, can kind of break you down. And that's hard, it's hard. I know Denise said that in many ways, or in some ways, Bud, while he loved his life and certainly loved his family and loved his son in particular, that life also was difficult and it took stuff out of him.

And we can all experience that, and don't we all experience that in our lives? You especially as you gather here to remember Bud, the loss of his love and his friendship that we've shared as your oldest brother or dear friend. But that now that presence isn't here anymore. And there can be a hole inside of us as we long to have that hole filled.

And how is that filled?

We gather here today to recognize that it's not up to the stuff of the world to fill us. But we offer ourselves to God in our need for healing, in our need for help, in our need to be made whole again, that we give ourselves over to God, so that God can fill us, that God can heal us, and that we can be strengthened by a faith that we profess: that Jesus is more powerful than evil, than sin, than illness, than disease, and even more powerful than death.

We proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that evil is already mortally wounded that Jesus has defeated evil on earth and it will not survive. Death will not survive because of the resurrection of Jesus.

And so that gives us hope that the next time we see Bud and all of our family members and we're all together again, it will be in the fullness of the kingdom where there isn't any little piece of the world that can take us down, that can make us less than who we were called to be and chosen to be in Christ.

And so while filled with sadness and filled with grief and with hurt, we also are grateful in the expectation that we all will be reunited again and that we will experience the fullness of life together, where there isn't anything that will get in the way of us being ourselves in Christ, of us loving one another unreservedly, showing that Christ has the power to comfort and has comforted everything.

With the image that's in the gospel of the yoke is a powerful image, but we often misunderstand it. 'Cause I always thought of the yoke of Christ as quite heavy. As a priest, the stole that we wear, which is the vestment that comes down here, it's a long piece, and it just comes down the front, that is supposed to represent the yoke of Jesus Christ that we are united with Christ as priests but also as disciples. We are called to bear the gentle will of Jesus. But often we don't think of our faith as gentle. It's something that we have to work at.

But the way that it is interpreted in this gospel passage is different from the idea of a heavy yoke. So the idea is that we are walking beside Jesus and he is the older, wiser brother. The older, stronger role. And we are next to him, and he is bearing the brunt of our burden as we are beginners, as we are people who sometimes succeed and sometimes fail, but are always still learning and about this life and how God calls us to live in this life.

And so Jesus as the strong one can walk that straight path, and we, as he's doing all the heavy lifting, we can walk beside him and learn how to walk that straight path from him. In companionship with him. And that's a powerful image

So when we experience grief and at times in our life, think that we're lost and not know which way to go, we can recall this image and recognize that Christ is always companion to us, always walking beside us, as the stronger one, as the one who can teach us how to walk straight, how to live our life with the expectation of the fullness of God's light being poured out on us. That walk of righteousness, that walk of life.

We're all in this journey together. And the beautiful thing today is that as we lift up Bud's life, in love, and all of his wonderful accomplishments, and all of his wonderful gifts of love that he has shared with you as family members throughout your life, as we lift all of that up together, it is made perfect in Christ. And we can be and are strengthened by our faith and grace, that we have been made whole. And it is Christ who can fill us and strengthen us and teach us and companion us through this time this time of loss until we are all reunited together in the fullness of the kingdom where there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more tears, no more sadness.

We give thanks and glory to God in our Lord Jesus Christ for saving us, healing us, and bringing us to eternal life.