

## Homily for Fr. Ed Kilianski, SCJ

Given by Fr. John Czyzynski, SCJ

Mass of Christian Burial, July 13, 2022  
Sacred Heart Monastery / Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

Ed chose the readings from Sacred Scripture that were just proclaimed, so although I might be the one talking up here, it is really Ed who is sharing with us what he wants us to be reflecting on and praying about as we gather to celebrate his life. In choosing the reading from Wisdom, Ed places before us a beautiful summary of what we believe about death. The author of the book of Wisdom declares that the foolish think death is utter destruction, but the truth is that death is not the end and Ed wants us to trust that he is at peace with God. I heard a story that conveyed in a more homey way that same beautiful truth which was proclaimed in the book of Wisdom. As the story goes there was a woman who requested that she be buried with a fork in her hand. When asked why, she explained that when she was growing up her family did not have an abundance of silverware so when they finished the main course and the dishes were being picked up, her Mom would say: "Save your fork for dessert; the best is yet to come." Death is not the end. The best is yet to come.

As I tell that story about the woman and her family, I want to be sure that the different families (besides his SCJ family) that were part of Ed's life, know how much you meant to him. When Ed knew that his days were numbered, the first place he went to was Buffalo to spend time with his brothers Don and John and their families. He loves you very much and he wanted to be with you one last time. Then he went to Houston to be with the parishioners who embraced him and enriched his life. All of you have to know that you are precious to him as he is to you.

The author of the book of Wisdom goes on to declare that in this life, at times, the just seem to be punished but in reality, they/we are being purified by God, as gold in the furnace, and God finds us worthy of Himself (really God makes us worthy of Himself) and takes us to Himself. The furnace that was purifying Ed was all that he had to go through in his life: the many surgeries he had to endure, the hardship and responsibilities that he carried as provincial superior. Then when his term was ending and he was looking forward to some much-deserved respite, he found that he had to battle pancreatic cancer. You would think that all of that would tend to drag him down, but instead, it seemed to me that he would be more discouraged when Notre Dame or the Buffalo Bills lost a football game. The reason that he was able to carry on as he did was that he tried to accept all that was going on in his life in the spirit of oblation which is central to his and our life as Priests of the Sacred Heart. He always said that he was accepting the cross in his life in that spirit. Ed has been purified as gold in the furnace and God has taken him to Himself.

The reading from Romans reminds us that in life and in death we are the Lord's. We belong to God. Since we belong to God, we have to give an account of our life to show that we have lived as persons who do belong to God. By choosing the passage from Mathew's gospel that contains the parable Jesus gave us about the last judgment, Ed is saying to us that Jesus has clearly indicated the matter concerning which we are to give an account. I don't believe that there is any other place in the Sacred Scriptures that describes so clearly what God is looking for in those who belong to God. God wants us to look at our brothers and sisters and see them as God does and do for them what we would want to

do for God to show our love. God wants us to have a heart like God's heart and to reach out lovingly to those in need. The truly wondrous element in that scene described in the gospel is that those who respond lovingly to those in need are told that their acts of kindness are received by God as having been rendered to God, even though those persons never made a specific intention to do for God what they did for the person or persons before them. They just saw a person in need and did what they believed that one who belongs to God is called to do.

Father Vien, as our provincial, has received many comments from people whose lives were touched by Ed. SCJs from other entities in our congregation have spoken of Ed's kindness and welcoming attitude, of his commitment to the province and to the congregation, of his care and sense of deep listening to them. People in the parish where Ed ministered spoke of how their lives were touched by his kindness, his warmth. They expressed gratitude for Ed's befriending their family, being a true shepherd. One person said that Ed guided her son through his hardest hours. Ed tried to live what Jesus described in that parable.

When Mary Gorski published the announcement of Ed's death in our Fridge Notes [weekly newsletter] she included a quote from the letter that Ed wrote to us last Thanksgiving. Those words are a beautiful challenge from Ed to all of us to learn to live gratefully. Here's what Ed wrote:

"Often, we face challenges in ministry, in community or in our personal lives. We must thank God for the blessings God has given us. We also must be grateful for the journey God has taken us on during our lives. We must even thank God for the opportunity to suffer. Each moment has led us closer to Jesus and our desire for intimacy with the Heart of Christ. Without gratitude, we will be stuck, unable to move toward the great things God has in store for us. Once we get to a place of thanksgiving we can live enthusiastically in the present and look forward to what is to come in this life and the next."

Ed didn't just WRITE those words. He lived with that disposition of gratitude. Ed often used a phrase that he said he picked up during his days of ministry in Houston. If you did some little thing for Ed, he would say: "I 'preciate ya." Ed, we 'preciate ya and we assure you of our remembrance in prayer. We ask you to remember us before our loving God and we ask that you pray for us that we would learn from the example you gave us: to live a life of oblation with a grateful spirit.