

Funeral Homily – Daniel Desmond (“Des”) McCarthy – March 21st 2018

Saint Agnes Cathedral, Rockville Centre, New York

Joining with Bishop Barres, Bishop Murphy, Bishop Brennan, Msgr. Koenig, the rector, along with the many priests gathered here, and, with representatives in such great numbers from The Orders of Malta & Holy Sepulchre, Catholic Charities, Molloy College, Mercy Hospital, and many other organizations that DES was deeply committed to, → all together – we offer our condolences, prayers and love – to Pat, Des’s beloved spouse of 67 years, and, their children: Regina, Patti, Danny, Brian, F.J. and Barbara, and, all his beautiful family!

Easter came two weeks early for Des McCarthy on St. Patrick’s Day’s morning after a six-month illness. Prior to Labor Day of last year, Des was still going to work every day at age 90 and going to the gym each morning to exercise! And each and every day – began [right] here at St. Agnes for Mass – where Des & Pat were in communion with the Lord Jesus, each other, their family and friends! The weather could be like it is today (snowy and icy) – or worse - and they would still be here together to pray!

Des worked hard all his life to keep himself in shape – intellectually, physically and spiritually, so that he could function at an optimal level for his family, his friends, his church and the multiple organizations and charities he devoted his life to! Perhaps it’s no coincidence that on St. Patrick’s Day, the Morning Prayer Psalm of the Church that day was Psalm 92 which says: “*To those who are faithful, you give the wild ox’s strength; planted in the house of the Lord, still bearing fruit when they are old; still full of sap; still GREEN; they will flourish in the courts of the Lord.” And so we gather together this morning to pray and to thank the Lord for the many ways that Des McCarthy was always open to cooperate with God’s guidance throughout his life, and, how that collaboration – with God’s grace – brought so much (so many blessings) to others!*

When Des was only 4 years old, in the midst of the Great Depression, he left his native Ireland with his parents and brother, bound for Australia! Fortunately, for everyone here today, the family never made it to Australia! Once they disembarked on Ellis Island, America became their home! And it was probably way back then – even as a youngster – that Des McCarthy began “calling the shots!”

Even to Des’s last months and days, he was still “*in charge*” thinking about you, his family, and preparing everyone for his departure to the Kingdom of God, waiting (as he suffered), till everyone was “on board” and then, letting go with “*the sure and certain hope of our faith*” – “*that we will see him again when the love of Christ – which conquers all things destroys even death itself.*” It is that faith that brings us here today knowing that he is at peace, at home in heaven with his parents and brother, and, his beloved granddaughter Hannah, and all the family and friends that proceeded him to Life Eternal!

It’s no secret that Des often did “things” his way! But “his way” was always infused with a purpose – with a sense of honor and justice and service! It didn’t matter to him if his sense of duty was going to bring him into conflict with his children, his co-workers, cardinals, bishops or priests, fellow Board members or members of the Order of Malta (especially-?)! He was always on a mission – of service! But he didn’t always have the virtue of patience! Except for the “one” (the only one, besides God) – whom he always deferred to – the one he called “Little Mother” – Pat! And what a beautiful manifestation their commitment as “soul-mates” were for **67 faithful years** of Christian marriage!

When Bishop John McGann gave Des the highest honor bestowed by the church – *Papal Knight of Saint Gregory*, the bishop said – “in my opinion, no lay person has done more for the church of Rockville Centre – than Des McCarthy!” But, he (realistically) added: “And nobody does it the way Des does!”

A month ago today (on February 21st) – at age 99, Dr. Billy Graham entered Eternal Life! He had an epithet (a phrase) prepared for the tombstone (for himself and his wife) that could also be appropriate for Des! ... Think of driving on a highway, through a construction zone over some rough roads and detours: to put this expression

in context: The Graham tombstone reads: “END OF CONSTRUCTION!! THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE.” I think that might be a message Des leaves to us today! “END OF CONSTRUCTION! THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE” –” with me ... as I tried to “Serve the Lord with Gladness” {*Episcopal motto of Bishop McGann*}.

And I think one of the best Gospel references to Des is (what we just heard) – the parable of the Good Samaritan! Jesus was asked outright what we “*must do to inherit eternal life?*” And his answer was to tell the story of the Good Samaritan. Who was the Good Samaritan? ... We don’t know for sure, but it’s clear he was a layperson, not a religious professional! In fact, he was probably some sort of business person! Because why else would he be “on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho;” and, have “oil and wine” with him; – and, be able to pay the innkeeper “to take care of the victim;” and promise to return on his “way back?” In other words, the Good Samaritan was in the midst of doing his job – when he was asked to be a good neighbor! His understanding of human need wouldn’t let him “*cross to the opposite side of the street!*”

So, as we think of this parable of the Good Samaritan, I think there are some resemblances to Des! And, maybe there’s an invitation (perhaps a challenge-?) to “***go and do likewise!***” ... Just think of this parable as if it was DES with that inn-keeper! The unsuspecting innkeeper -- might have been a little overwhelmed by this fellow (this Samaritan guy) who barges in with a beaten, broken man and then, starts barking out orders: “Do this, do that, here’s some money to pay for everything! **I’ll be back** to make sure my directions are carried out and to take care of anything else! Ok? Got it! Good!” ... Sounds (a little bit) like Des – doesn’t it? Sounds like home? Sounds like Des on a Lourdes pilgrimage for 32 years? Sounds like the office too? Yes?

And maybe, on his return trip, this Good Samaritan might have thought – “end of construction (end of this good deed), – thank you, Mr. Innkeeper for your patience with me in helping a neighbor.” ...

Let’s speculate also on the reaction (the feelings) of the innkeeper after the Good Samaritan continued down the road to Jericho. How was he challenged, inspired, maybe even changed a bit by this demonstration of neighborly care? Perhaps this experience made the innkeeper evaluate his own level of commitment to human need. Maybe he felt uncomfortable with this broken man being left in his charge (and now having to take care of him). He could have even been angry at the Good Samaritan’s assertive nature (as well the demands!).

Likewise, I think Des’s commitment to so many causes (and individuals) made others think about how expansive or restrictive – our definition of “my neighbor” is! Des McCarthy’s example challenged the human temptation (and frequent tendency) to “*cross to the other side of the street.*” He put his time, talent and treasure into active engagement with others and in the public square. And yes, he got very impatient when others didn’t step up a bit too! He did it “his way.” But that “way” always had a “**mission.**” It’s interesting to consider that – no one would remember the story of the Good Samaritan (whoever he was) if he only had good intentions! He had money (and time and some energy) as well! And he used it – for others!

There a phrase I’d like to suggest we think about as we remember the example Des left. The phrase is this: ABUNDANCE – WITHOUT ATTACHMENT! Des was a very successful man. He had an abundance of opportunities and resources – but he wasn’t attached to the un-necessary things of life!

Here are a few examples of his “*abundance without attachment.*” ... (1) Every day (till last September), Des would go off to work with a sandwich prepared at home by Pat! He could have gone out for lunch or ordered in! But he was frugal – saving his resources – for more important endeavors than himself! Abundance – without attachment! ... (2) A few years ago, Des and Pat went on a pilgrimage to the Island of Malta. As usual, they flew economy class! But this time their luggage was lost for 3 very long days! Someone said – “you can buy the plane – why don’t you go first class and secure your baggage?” He said – “other people need what that costs more than us!” Abundance – without attachment! ... (3) Des would say – “the Stock Market is up over 300 points – today! But it will go down and level off. Here today; gone tomorrow.” He put time and efforts into his business – but

that wasn't his life's worth. Abundance without attachment! ... (4) When Des heard about a priest in jail who couldn't afford bail, immediately he put up \$100K – simply because he was asked. No explanation needed. Abundance – without attachment! ... (5) Just last night, Archbishop Chris Cardone of the Solomon Islands sent an email asking that mention be made at this Mass [this morning] that Des was a great benefactor of the Dominican missions through the years and how his donations helped to build up the church on the other side of the world! Abundance – without attachment! ... (6) At the wake yesterday, someone said to FJ” “you'll never know how far and wide your dad's compassion and generosity went!” Abundance without attachment! (So many examples of that!)

So, a message we might take away with us today is – “*go and do likewise*” as we try to expand the definition and the answer to the question: “And, WHO *is my neighbor?*” Because, the only thing we take with us when we die – is what we've given away! Abundance without attachment.

However, Des McCarthy had “attachment WITH abundance” to his faith, his family and his friendships. ... To you, Des's beloved grandchildren, you know (you've seen) how much your parents have tried to imitate the witness of your grandparents and how they've “*inherited*” and lived so many of the virtues of your grandparents! Your Pop-Pop had many gifts and blessings – in abundance! And so do you! You witnessed how he kept himself in shape physically, intellectually and spiritually. That's why he was “so strong” in many ways.

But he was only really attached – to his faith (to the Eucharist, the Mass), totally attached in devoted love to your grandmother; complexly attached to setting the example of service to your parents, all the while – “**seeking to inherit Eternal Life!**” As people of faith – you know where he is: at home with God forever in heaven! And like the inn-keeper in the parable of the Good Samaritan, you'll be getting spiritual “visitations” from THIS Good Samaritan (your Pop-Pop)! He'll be “back” – in your thoughts and prayers – to check in and checkup – with you!

When you're tempted, to “*cross to the opposite side of the street,*” listen to your Pop Pop's voice from above – to get involved; to get your hands and hearts engaged in the service of others. There will be many times that – if you pay attention to his intercession, his voice and his memory – you will be called into the public square to take a stand and make a difference in the world – for others!

So, I think Des's message to each of you, his grandchildren is – in your own ways – like your grandparents and your parents – “*go and do likewise.*”

Abundance without attachment!
But attachment – with abundance – to God and family!
“End of construction! Thank you for your patience!”

Msgr. Frank Caldwell