

One of the most telling attributes of someone is how they face death. Claude took the news of his illness with dignity. He didn't bemoan the end of his life. He spent a lot of time this last year with friends and families – and he got a real hoot out of people wanting to buy him lunch and letting them do so!

None of us knew whether the doctor's diagnosis and guess on the time Claude had left was accurate or not. Claude didn't really seem to care – he went on living his life just like he had before. Perhaps moving a bit slower as time went by, with less energy and not always able to do as much as he had before, but certainly not sitting home and moping. He still found things to laugh at and people to enjoy. One of the last things Claude did was to join a group of us for "Happy Hour" with Joe O'Rourke as Joe got ready to move to Des Moines Iowa to be closer to Joe's family. There is a wonderful picture of Joe and Claude that evidences their deep friendship and honors the work they did together with The Leadership Academy. Being with Claude was being with someone who could make you laugh. Being with Claude was being with someone who had a huge heart.

Claude was who he was to the very end. That last week in the hospital, we prayed – we gave thanks for his life, we gave thanks for his faith, we gave thanks for all those that God had put in Claude's world that he found a way to help. He loved you – and he loved life- and he lived his faith. Claude and I had several occasions over this last year to talk about his life and about his faith. Claude spoke several times about the importance of his faith – and that he hoped others had or would find a way to faith to help them in times of trouble and grief as well as in times of happiness and celebration.

Claude chose the readings and prayers for today. He was adamant that we read *A General Thanksgiving*, which we will do shortly. That particular prayer was one that had special meaning for Claude. He used to come and sit here in the Church all by himself and pray that prayer. He found comfort and sanctuary here in the quiet and also on Sundays with the gathered community.

The poem in the funeral leaflet expresses Claude's fundamental values:

I am only one, but I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But I can do something.  
And I will not let what I cannot do  
Interfere with what I can do. (Edward Everett Hale)

If you get a chance, go into Whitlock Hall and on the bulletin board you will see just a small portion of what Claude, one person, did. He was always looking for ways to make life better for those he came into contact with.

Claude chose the Gospel reading of the story of Lazarus for several reasons. One because he had some rough times in his life and he learned to lean on his faith and his belief in the resurrection. He believed that one day we will all be reunited with God and with those whom we love. In his case, Linda, his wife, and Chris, his son. Claude's faith told him that they would be reunited at Claude's death – and that they are waiting for us when it is our turn to leave this earth.

The second reason Claude chose the story of Lazarus is that the Scripture shows us that it is okay to challenge Jesus. It is okay to say, “Hey, this is wrong! Where are you God? Why didn’t you come when I needed you?” Asking questions of God and learning to listen for answers, especially when times are rough, deepens our faith if we will let it. Knowing that God is walking alongside us as we walk through life can bring a comfort and the assurance that we are never alone.

Claude chose the reading from Lamentations to be paired with the story of Lazarus as a reminder that the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases and that God is always faithful to us. The Lord is good to those who wait for him and to the soul that seeks God. Claude wasn’t an evangelist in the sense of standing on a street corner thumping a Bible and challenging passersby to come to Jesus. Claude was an evangelist in the sense that he lived out his faith through everyday actions. All you have to do is read the obituaries and newspaper articles about things he did – not to receive acclaim but rather because that is what God called him to do.

The reading from Romans is another reminder to us who are still living that the God Claude believed in – the God I believe in- is always with us regardless of what happens in the world. On those deep and dark days when Claude struggled following the death of Linda and later the death of Chris, this Scripture helped him hang on.

The following could have been written with Claude in mind. I commend it to you for your own reflection:

**Has someone seen Christ in you today?**

Christian, look to your **HEART**, I pray.  
 The little things you have done or said –  
 Did they accord with the way you prayed?  
 Have your thoughts been pure and your words been kind?  
 Have you sought to have the Savior’s mind?  
 The world with a criticizing view  
 Has watched – but did it see Christ in you?

**Has someone seen Christ in you today?**

Christian, look to your **LIFE**, I pray.  
 There are aching hearts and blighted souls  
 Being lost in sin’s destructive shoals.  
 And perhaps of Christ their only view  
 May be what of Him they see in you.  
 Will they see enough to bring hope and cheer?  
 Look to your light! Does it shine out clear? –Anonymous

I saw Christ in Claude each time we were together – his smile, his laugh, and his funny stories – and his faith which was the foundation for who he was and what he did. Claude’s prayer for you is that you remember him with fondness and laughter. And that you have a faith which will help you in times of trouble and grief and in times of laughter and celebration. Go in peace, Claude. You have run your race and now rest with the angels. Well done, you faithful servant. **Amen.**