

November 2, 2014 – All Souls Day – Year A
Past, Future & Present

Andrew Joseph Martin Mueller. My Dad.

Hermine Marie Eigenbauer Mueller. My Mom.

May they rest in peace!

Julius Eigenbauer, my grandfather. He taught me a lot about carpentry.

Theresa Berger Eigenbauer, my grandmother. She made some tasty Hungarian foods and I watched her make some fantastic strudels.

Catherine Schramm Mueller, my other grandmother. She made great kuchen every week. Kuchen is a sweet bread that sometimes has fruit in it - delicious - a little butter or a little jam. Um, Um, Good!.

She's also memorable for grandma-type sayings:

- "Order is the first law of heaven."
- "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

And lastly, Andrew Mueller, a grandfather I never met since he died before I was even born.

May they all rest in peace.

In front of all of you I publicly thank God for each and all of them.

They were marvelous relatives with a great influence on me.

In addition to thanking God, I also thank my parents and grandparents; without them I would not even exist!

The past. *[put out the first sign: "Past"]*

Reflecting on it.

Being thankful for it.

Those are two actions that fit today on the Feast of All Souls.

[Flip first sign to backside "Reflect" and "Thanks"]

As we reflect on the past, some of our memories of family events may not be so positive. I recall one uncle who had a drinking problem and was abusive to my aunt. Two of their children swore that they would never drink because they did not want to be like their father. We are thankful for the positive results that came out of bad situations.

Our Scriptures and our whole liturgy also call on us to look to the past. We recall that God created us all and sent Jesus to make our connections with God more intimate and even stronger.

St. Paul tells us today in his letter to the Romans that we "were baptized into his (Christ's) death. We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might live in newness of life."

When we were immersed in the font at baptism, there in the back of church, we went through a transition that strengthened us for the struggles of this life here on earth.

That transition, in turn, prepared us for a future transition promised by Jesus in John's Gospel.

[Put out second sign: "Future"]

"For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day."

"And I shall raise him on the last day."

Now that is some transition!

And Jesus gives us even more encouragement by telling us that

"I will not reject anyone who comes to me."

I can just imagine the warm welcome that awaits us in the future ... arms extended ... a strong hug ... just like we get at the kiss of peace here at Mass.

That's what the future has to hold for us: peace and joy!

[Flip "Future" sign to "Peace" "Joy"]

Today's reading from Wisdom gives us a word to describe that whole future event: "immortality" - not just a long life, but living forever - body and soul.

Yes, this life on earth is just a warm-up for the real event of a lifetime.

Have you given any thought lately to life after death?

As a deacon friend used to ask, "What's your 5,000 year plan?"

Today's opening prayer brings our attention to the present moment.

[put up third sign "Present"]

"Listen kindly to our prayers, O Lord,
and, as our faith in your Son,
raised from the dead, is deepened,
so may our hope of resurrection for your departed servants
also find new strength."

Those key words, faith and hope, point to our attitude for today.

Faith in Jesus, already raised from the dead.

Hope of the resurrection for those who have died and for ourselves as well.

[Flip sign three to back side: "Faith" "Hope"]

Psalms 23, a familiar and a favorite among the 150 Psalms, continues that spirit of hope when it says:

"Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil;
for you are at my side with your rod and your staff
that give me courage."

Yes, one of the blessings that comes with hope is that our fears decrease.

The fear of death can be overcome with the hope that Jesus encourages, the hope that we can and will spend all eternity with Jesus.

Just last year at this time, Pope Francis offered his own words of encouragement.

*The virtue of "hope is like a bit of leaven that enlarges your soul.
There are difficult moments in life,
but with hope you go forward and keep your eyes on what
awaits us.*

*Today is a day of hope;
our brothers and sisters are in the presence of God, and we, too,
will be there in the Lord's arms if we follow the path of Jesus."*

(Verano Cemetery, Rome, Outdoor Mass, Nov. 1, 2013)

It is so fitting on a day of hope, like today, that we remember and celebrate the lives of our fellow parish members who have died over this past year.

I invite you to also reflect on your own parents and grandparents

- think about our lives with them
- think about how they have helped us
- and definitely thank the Lord for them.

We can remember our deceased family members by putting their names into the "Book of the Our Deceased".

(The book is at the back of church by the large red vigil light)

The whole parish will join in praying for them.

Perhaps we may also ask the deceased to pray for us as well.

I would also like to make another recommendation for today.

Today's Gospel was part of the 6th Chapter of St. John's Gospel.

It's quite a chapter.

Consider creating some time (Oh, about 15 minutes) this week to read the rest of Chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel.

Reflect on the PAST and give thanks.

Look forward to peace and joy in the FUTURE.

Grow in faith and hope here in the PRESENT time.