

Homily for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Yesterday morning,
while Ted Kennedy's funeral was celebrated and televised,
other funerals were being celebrated all around the archdiocese,
including a funeral Mass in our parish for Phil Murphy.

In the church where you and I are gathered,
Phil was baptized, received the Eucharist for the first time,
was confirmed, was married to his wife, Donna,
and yesterday he was buried from this same house of prayer.

Phil grew up in Concord but had moved to Acton
where he lived with his wife and four children.
He was not quite 51 years old when he died on Tuesday night.

Here, in their own words,
is how family and friends described Phil:
*a family man through and through,
a model for husbands, fathers, brothers and uncles,
dependable, loyal, selfless to the core available
and ready to serve the needs of others...*
And at the heart of all this was Phil's faith.
Phil was a man who lived his faith.
He was faithful to prayer *in* church
and lived that prayer, *outside* of church, by the example he gave,
always putting others' needs ahead of his own, day by day...

I share all of that with you because the story of Phil Murphy,
the life of Phil Murphy, is a beautiful homily on today's scriptures.

Recall the words in today's first scripture:
*Observe my decrees that you may live
and may enter and take possession of the land the Lord gives you.
And thus you will give evidence of your wisdom...*
Phil, for over 30 years an electronics technician in Concord,
so faithfully lived by God's word, day in and day out,
that his family wrote in his obituary,
*We find comfort in knowing
that Phil's place in heaven was secured long ago.*
Because they recognized the wisdom of his goodness and faithfulness
they were confident that Phil had entered and taken possession
of the place the Lord had readied for him in heaven.

And in the second scripture this day we heard,
*Humbly welcome the word
that has been planted in you*

*and is able to save your souls.
Be doers of the word and not hearers only,
deluding yourselves.*

Phil's life was a simple one.

News of his death did not make the headlines or television.
But he was a headliner in the hearts of his family and friends
and in the hearts of the youngsters he coached
in the Acton-Boxborough Little League and Youth Hockey League,
and in the hearts of all whose lives were touched by his,
because he humbly welcomed the gifts God gave him
and used them generously to serve others, day by day.

The hypocrisy Jesus condemns in the gospel today finds no home
in the hearts of those who humbly welcome the Lord's word
and live by it.

You may not have known Phil Murphy
but you know men and women like him
whose honest, genuine hearts are a blessing for all who know them.

Each of us is called by today's scriptures to just such a life,
day by day...

Each of us knows well the ways in which we fail
to be doers of the word and not just hearers.
Each of us knows well how what's inside us
does not always match the appearance we try to give.
We know what is genuine in our lives
and we know what is less than genuine
and we know when we are hypocrites.

The Lord set his law before the Israelites as a gift,
given that they might learn how to truly live.
The Lord sets the same promise before us today,
that we might lead lives genuinely formed by his word,
that one day we might "enter in and take possession of the place"
Christ has made ready for us in heaven.

For now, the Lord invites us now to his table to be nourished
to hear his word and to welcome it humbly.
Pray with me that one day others will say with confidence
that our place in heaven was secured, yours and mine,
by the grace of God and our living in humble fidelity to his word,
day by day...

-Rev. Austin H. Fleming