

June 26, 2016

But Nobody Ever Told Me... XVII

Tradition is surprisingly fragile. Once a link of the chain is broken, it is extremely difficult to reattach—and if it effects a second link—almost impossible. What often happens in many disciplines is that an older generation assumes that the younger generation knows how and why certain things are done. We can see this in everything from sports practices to cooking recipes.

Summary of the importance of Christian Burial Rites:

In the Vigil, we remember our own mortality (we *will* see our beloved again, but not *here*), sinfulness, and the universal need for Mercy. In addition, having our routines broken and attention grasped, we can renew (or begin!) the plotted course of our lives toward Heaven, hopefully to be reunited with all our beloved deceased in the embrace of God.

In the Funeral Mass, we take all of our emotions (from the extreme of joy/relief for an end of suffering, through sorrow and even the other extreme of abandonment and anger) and pain (sometimes even physical!) and turn that into a prayer for the salvation of our beloved deceased. This prayer is united to the prayer of Christ (what the Mass is). Together, we (the bereaved and Christ) offer this prayer for our beloved to the Father for the salvation of their souls. We know that it is the Father's Will that none be lost. This makes for a formidable combination.

In the Committal or burial, we make to formal presentation of our beloved to God that was initiated at the Funeral. It lovingly lays our beloved's body to the 'sleep' of death to awake at the Resurrection, and it commends their soul to rest in Eternity. No longer bound to this broken, dark, and pain-filled world, they can be at peace.

It also gives us the peace of 'closure'. A chapter of our own lives is closed. If we focus our attention to the present pain of a past loss to the exclusion of any hope that we could ever again experience joy, we lose the ability to live in the present and to experience the good things in this life. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

So, what should be in our hearts as we struggle with the pain of loss?

Heavenly Father, Jesus said pick up your cross and follow me. *His* last words on the Cross were "Father into Your hands I commend my spirit". My beloved was a beautiful gift to me and has enriched my life indescribably. Thank you. I now present him/her back to You—You Who are beyond immortal, beyond infinite, and even love him/her more than I do as difficult as that is to imagine. There is nothing more I can do for him/her in this life. He/she has moved beyond the reach of my arms, but not beyond the reach of my heart or my prayers. So, into Your hands I commend his/her spirit.

*Fr. Michael*