

Archbishop Lori's remarks at Bishop Curlin's funeral Mass

Bishop Curlin's funeral Mass

Remarks: "Self-Giving Love; Love to the End"

St. Gabriel Church, Charlotte, NC

Jan. 2, 2018

Thank you, Bishop Jugis, for the privilege of serving as the principal celebrant of Bishop Curlin's Funeral Mass and for your constant presence in the final days of the Bishop's life. I'm also grateful for the opportunity to offer a few reflections about Bishop Curlin.

Two themes from Scripture capture for me Bishop Curlin's life.

First, is the self-giving love of Jesus who expended himself endlessly, preaching and ministering to the sick and poor, and then laid down his life out love for us and all the world.

And second, is love to the very end – as St. John says of Jesus – “he loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end” (Jn. 13:1).

Father Curlin, Monsignor Curlin, Bishop Curlin gave of himself always, from his first days as the third assistant pastor at St. Gabriel's in Washington, D.C., right down to the very last weeks and even days of his life.

Mention has been made of his love for the sick but I can share an experience of my own.

Years ago, when I was a recently ordained priest, I was in the car heading back to the parish when I began to feel chest pains and thus I landed in a hospital. I think I was still in the emergency room when none other than Monsignor Curlin appeared with the holy oils and the ritual and the best-ever bedside manner.

Next day, he walked into my hospital room with my mother whom he had flown from

Louisville so that she could look after her son. Thankfully, I recovered from my illness, I did not die in his arms, and I did not become a retreat story!

Bishop Curlin was also the go-to person when things went wrong.

My first pastor was one of Bill Curlin's dearest friends but these two friends could not have been more different. On occasion my pastor would "go into orbit" and when *that* happened *anything* could happen as on the day when he fired the housekeeper .

I was awestruck; it was like witnessing a typhoon or an earthquake and if this firing had been written up in an HR manual it would be in the chapter entitled "Mistakes to Avoid."

No sooner did this happen when my pastor realized how wrong it all was and, of course, the person he called was his friend, Monsignor Curlin, who dropped everything and came to visit his friend, and me, the bewildered assistant.

But Father Curlin never came empty-handed - he brought a large bag of Roy Rogers hamburgers and fries and by the end of the evening he not only had us both laughing at ourselves but he also gave his good friend and my pastor the right advice for resolving this matter justly and charitably; and he gave me an invaluable lesson in priestly friendship and fraternity.

No matter what he was doing, Bishop Curlin would drop everything when someone was sick or in trouble or in distress. Many of us in this church have been consoled, counseled, and encouraged by this wonderful priest and bishop with an enormous capacity for friendship, but not just ordinary friendship, but a friendship rooted in the Lord's love.

How many priestly and religious vocations he fostered and saved; how many priests he put on the path to holiness; how many married couples he kept together.

I can tell you that he not only helped me answer my call to become a priest but also, through the years, he helped me embrace my vocation, especially in times of difficulty or discouragement.

Long before Pope Francis spoke of encountering the Lord and one another,

accompanying one another, of priests being close to the people they serve – Bishop Curlin lived that reality, whether he was an assistant pastor, a vocations director, a pastor, an auxiliary bishop or the Bishop of Charlotte.

A few days after Bishop Curlin's death, one of his ecumenical colleagues said that Bishop Curlin just "exuded" Christ, he radiated Christ, he radiated the joy of the Gospel and holiness of life. That is why his ministry seemed to be so spontaneous and effortless – preaching, five to seven day retreats, three talks a day, without a note, free to be wherever he was needed most, an uncanny sense of the real Gospel priority in almost any situation.

This is not to say that he did not experience deep suffering in his life, including deep spiritual suffering and the suffering that comes when one takes the risk of loving others selflessly.

Yet, when Bishop Curlin smiled at you, it was Jesus smiling, and when he embraced you, it was the embrace of Jesus.

In these last years, when I'd talk with the Bishop on the phone, he'd say that his days were quiet and that not so many people came to visit . . . but of course that wasn't true, as I witnessed firsthand when I'd visit him in person. He did a land office business on the phone as people called for advice or just to say hello, he was always out confirming or saying Mass for the Missionaries of Charity, or taking an out of town visitor to Maggiano's (he was their best customer!), and people dropped in constantly, including, I understand, some grade school students who visited only a few weeks ago.

Bishop Curlin would have it no other way. He was born to be a priest. He was born to love – and he loved us to the very end – like Jesus.

Bill, may your great priestly soul rest in the peace of Christ!