

“Death Will Be No More”

Revelation 21:1-6a

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. Mourning and crying and pain will be no more.” That is the promise and hope I share with many of the saints we remember today. Our prayers have been with their families as they grieve. We grieve with the hope and promise of Easter morning.

Joan Hesper headed south to Capital University, our Lutheran college in Bexley, where she graduated in 1957 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in elementary education. She spent her first four years teaching kindergarten and then second grade at Monroe Elementary in Sandusky.

Then Joan discovered the green pastures and not so-still waters flowing down from the Rocky Mountains in Colorado Springs. For 4 years she taught second grade at Adams Elementary in a brand-new building from where she could see Pike’s Peak. She shared an apartment with another teacher and fell in love with the mountains.

Joan was guided back to Ohio and Parma where she taught 2nd grade for the next 28 years for a total of 36 years of teaching, retiring at age 58.

Roy Devault had a love for fishing and fried perch. Storytelling was his specialty and harness horseracing was his passion. He was a proud grandfather, and football was his favorite topic of conversation. For someone who seemed to always run late, he definitely left this earth too soon.

Every year on the Sunday morning closest to Veterans Day, next Sunday, **Bill Schiffer**, would stand at the lectern in uniform and share readings to honor our veterans.

Bill kept us connected with American Legion Post 703 as its commander and we are always thankful for the post supporting our food pantry.

Bill's soul was restored when he returned to Cleveland, went back to work for the railroad and on August 2, 1974, married the beautiful young woman with the "nice smile" in the West Side Hungarian Church. Pictures of Bill in his younger years remind me of Burt Reynolds with his dark hair and mustache. Bill told me that Dorothy was a hairdresser but "she mostly raised the kids" – Denise, Cheryl, and Billy.

The Lord was her shepherd when at age 13, **Louise Horvath's** father died in an auto accident, forcing her and her mom to move in with an uncle until her mother remarried. Louise began learning as a young teenager how to weather the storms of life, how to be spiritually strong through the ups and downs of life.

When Frank was diagnosed with M.S. and Louise was forced into crisis mode again. Her mother moved in to help with the cooking and cleaning, to help with the children, and to help care for Frank. With Frank having served on Divinity's building and grounds board after joining in 1957 and Louise helping with vacation Bible school, with them bringing the whole family over to help put in the new lawn, when the new sanctuary was being built in 1965; members of Divinity now came to their house to help keep Frank walking and Al Radefeld would even bring him to church.

Jim and Marj Knodel joined Divinity in 1965 and were both active in our Divinity ministries.

When I arrived in 2003, they worshipped together every Saturday night in our chapel. Over the last 6 years of Marj's life, Jim faithfully made his hour-long morning and evening visits at Pleasant Valley, purely out of his love and commitment to Marj.

As Jim has walked through that valley in these last years, his family and his Stephen Minister, Ken, have been walking with him.

Terry Belia was never in want growing up. After high school, he went to work on the railroad and in a steel mill. Then came the draft and being sent to Vietnam to be part of an army artillery support unit in 1968-1969. He talked about experiencing the TET offensive, was a proud veteran who didn't appreciate the negative reception when the veterans came home. Terry did appreciate the veterans who came to his hospice room for a pinning ceremony. They read the following poem entitled, "It is the Veteran" ...

It is the Veteran, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the Veteran, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the Veteran, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the Veteran, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.

It is the Veteran, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the Veteran, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

It is the Veteran, who raises the flag, salutes the flag, serves the flag proudly, to one day be buried under the flag.

It is the Veteran.

Ron Clark was a bricklayer for over 50 years. He was the grandfather of Wayne Clark and Kristin Yarger and the great grandfather of Lexa, Hunter, and Roman. He enjoyed racing cars at our local tracks.

For ten years **Kay Randall** worked in our Divinity office working with Pastor Don. She also volunteered in our kitchen, where I remember waking her up one day when she fell asleep sitting on a stool, leaning against the sink. She was always proud of her 3 daughters.

Elaine Quint's soul was restored when Dick returned from war, and then the blessing of 3 children, Linda, Richard, and Neil. She told the story of her year at Kent State in the Cadet Teacher Program, but then Neil showed up as a surprise. So Elaine earned her associates at Tri-C and went to work as a teachers aid at Normandy. Elaine said, "I loved working with the little ones."

Which is exactly what Elaine did here at Divinity, when she joined in 1957. She told me she taught the preschool Sunday school class here for many years, teaching kids who are now my age. She often helped in the kitchen, brought food for funeral meals, volunteered in our library, sponsored new members, sent out get well cards, and participated in many Bible studies.

Marilyn's father wouldn't let her drive his car, but now she had a boyfriend who always had a car or 2 or 3 or 4. Marilyn soon got tired of having to climb through her window at night and her mom thinking someone was breaking in the house. So, they decided to get married even though **John Sesock** was catholic and no one in his family had ever married a protestant. Some of his family wouldn't enter Puritas Lutheran where they were married on May 7, 1960.

“I was relieved when John asked if he could become a member of the Lutheran Church. We lived in Northfield and still tried to make the journey to Puritas on Sundays.

Our children were both baptized at Puritas. When Mark was turning 5 and Kathy 2, we moved to Parma in 1966 and joined Divinity. In 1968 we both joined Eastern Star. We were Matron and Patron in 1977 and travelled all over Ohio.

Mary Schneider’s soul was restored as part of the PTA, Brownies, chairing girl scout cookie sales, and cooking her signature meat loaf for church dinners. She joined Divinity in 1979 and enjoyed serving here.

Mary’s soul was restored on her trips to Montana to visit Heidi, working in her garden, feeding the birds and squirrels, tending to her house plants-especially her African violets, traveling with Norm, and visiting with her neighbors and friends. Mary’s soul was restored on her weekly visits to her favorite hair salon and spending time with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Some referred to her as the “energizer bunny”, 104 years old, she had experienced the Great Depression, WWII, 1950’s baby boomers, walking on the moon, the inventions of computers, cell phones, and televisions, and then a new century and all that it brought.

Dale Linsenmeyer shared stories of his time serving with the Mennonite central committee doing agricultural development work in impoverished northern Greece. That kind of an experience when we're young radicalizes us to commit our lives to following Jesus’ example to recognize and respond to the needs of the poor. Dale and I shared that passion.

We did a book study titled “Partners in Prayer” that encouraged us to partner up and get together once a week to pray. Dale asked me if he could be my prayer partner. I came over 1 morning a week to drink coffee and eat homemade bread and jelly at the small kitchen table. We talked about what was going on with people around the world and in Beatrice and what was going on in our own families. I held his big hands in the middle of that small table, we took turns praying, and prayed the Lord's prayer together. Both of our souls were renewed.

Edith Selong was a traditional stay-at-home mom raising Rich and Bill and becoming known for her “historic meat loaf” and other meat and potato dinners that her husband loved. After raising her sons, she went to work at Winkelman’s but I’m told all of her earnings went for clothes. It’s claimed that she had 300 blouses, color-coded in a walk-in closet husband Joseph designed for her. In earlier years, I’m told she’d take the bus downtown to Higbee’s, Macy’s, Woolworths, and Halle’s and then to eat at the Forum cafeteria.

In 1983 they retired to the Florida gulf coast where Joseph golfed and Edith enjoyed the pool, beach walking, and socializing with her neighbors. She especially appreciated visits from her grandchildren that she would show off to her friends. Edith also enjoyed walking to Walmart.

Al Beifus built a greenhouse in his backyard on Beresford where he grew flowers and vegetables hearkening back to the greenhouses of his childhood.

Al was a voracious reader as Jennifer remembers him taking her to the library often when she was growing up.

Al enjoyed watching any W.W. II. movie and the old sitcom, “All in the Family”. I know Al appreciated Jeff Gattiker bringing him holy communion when he could no longer make it here.

The 22nd Psalmist cries out, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer; by night, but I find no rest.”

This is the same cry we hear from the Golgotha cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And there at the foot of the cross is a grieving mother, tears in her eyes, rolling down her cheeks, and then the mother’s son died. There is no grief, no tears so intense as a mother’s grief and tears after losing a child, after losing **Max Lamatrice** who was so deeply loved.

Ruth Kahn found the roller rink and a speed skater named Eddie who her boyfriend introduced her to. Eddie and Ruth were joined together in the covenant of marriage on October 2, 1948, at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church on Sauer Ave. God blessed them with 5 daughters – Donna, Beth, Barbara, Debbie, and Beverly. 5 daughters blessed Ruth with 17 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, and 2 great-great grandchildren with I’m sure many more to come.

Green pastures for **Mary Jo Tolbert** meant meeting and marrying Robert, a WWII veteran and a Lutheran. They were blessed with two children – Jerry and Laura – 4 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren. Mary Jo’s soul was restored serving in the Red Hat Society and spending time with her family.

Gunda Kueck was blessed when her 2 children were born, Gary in 1956 and Linda in 1961. Later, a friend invited Gunda to visit Divinity Lutheran Church.

She was very happy to attend because she said she had always wanted to be baptized. Her father only had one brother in the family baptized and Gunda was so pleased when she, Gary and Linda were baptized on the 4th Sunday in Lent on March 16, 1969. She was so grateful that she was finally a child of God. She said “Divinity was our home, it was nice.”

Bev Selong’s soul was restored going right to teaching high school typing and shorthand at Midpark H.S. for 3 years and then Brecksville H.S. for 3 years. Bev managed to earn her master’s from Kent State in 1969 while teaching, being pregnant with Jason, and cooking for Rich.

Bev’s soul was restored with the blessing of 3 children: Jason in ’69, Garth in ’71 and Kirsten in ’74.

They were blessed with a mother who never raised her voice, who was a good listener, never judged, and was extremely patient, even with her husband. I’ve heard stories of pork chops, green beans, and mushroom gravy in the same skillet. Homemade applesauce and strawberry jam. Sweet corn cut off the cob and frozen in the big chest freezer in the basement. Bev was meant to be a mom and then a grandma to 7 grandchildren.

My favorite **Cal and Barbara Bollinger** story is when they overlapped for 1 year in confirmation classes at Bethany English Lutheran Church. Then the two of them getting

married upon Barbara's high school graduation on June 6, 1953. Then they ended up in a new house in 1964 where they raised their 5 children.

Their children were blessed to be raised in a traditional home with Cal being the hardworking breadwinner as a project manager for an architectural firm. They put their marriage relationship first and parenting second – good role models.

Shirly Massaroni graduated from Beaver H.S. in West Virginia in 1952, went on to McClean Business School, and then worked as a secretary at General Motors. She met a young man named Emilio whom she married on October 17, 1954. Because of his job with General Electric, they started out in Bluefield where they were blessed with the births of Andrea, Gary, and Brenda.

After living in Buffalo, her family was blessed to come to the green pastures and still waters of Cleveland and Parma Heights in 1968. Shirley had become the traditional stay-at-home mom, cooking for and raising her children, taking them to Indians games at the old stadium with a picnic basket in hand full of good stuff, all without a drivers license. She loved to have fun with her children, even taking in the neighbor's kid who would eventually marry her son.

Wayne Zunt's soul was restored earning a degree from Capital University, while working as an electrical supervisor at LTV Steel for 20 years and then managing the production line at NIC Sand. Wayne's soul was restored getting his sons to where they needed to be, whether it was gigs or sports. Wayne's soul was restored with the gift of grandchildren and the

gift of receiving photos on his phone. Wayne was a dedicated father and grandfather who loved his blended family very much.

Lolly Bartian was blessed with three daughters - Brenda, Connie, and Carolyn. She went to work at Laub's Bakery, A&P Grocery for 20 years when the girls were young, and then Sherwin-Williams where she retired after 20 years. Her soul was restored when after moving to the suburbs in 1970, she got her driver's license and bought her first car – a Dodge Dart which made me smile because my first car in high school was a Dodge Demon - the sporty version of the Dart. Lolly and I were both cool in the 70s!

Elke Kelley's soul was restored in the kitchen. You described to me, “great schnitzel, chicken paprikash, and the best German pancakes.” Recruiting Renee and Brian to do art projects and to create homemade chocolate candy. Elke utilized the kitchen table to write letters, to crochet, to do ceramics and to paint. Elke wrote a Christmas letter to relatives in Germany and friends here. After St. Matthews closed and they transferred to Divinity in 2014, I started receiving those letters along with pictures.

An excerpt from Elke's 2020 Christmas letter... “I want to thank you for all your cards, thoughts, support and prayers...especially during this year of covid. Renee misses taking me to church every weekend, but I am used to this new normal now. It reminds me of when I was a little girl after the war. We had to quarantine ourselves in our houses when the Americans came to our village. We were allowed to have only 2 rooms in our own house, we would have had 3 rooms, if we had a boy in the family, but we only had 4 girls and my mom. Ahh, Memories of my childhood.” May the peace of God . . . #426 – Sing with All the Saints in Glory