

Winter 2014

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Recommended Citation

McAuley, P. (2014). A life shared. *Spiritan Magazine*, 38 (1). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol38/iss1/8>

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A life shared

Paul McAuley CSSp



I will try to be brief — but can one be brief celebrating ninety-four years of life?

I remember a number of years ago I came out to Georgetown to visit the folks for dinner. Dad and Mom and I were in the living room having a glass of wine before dinner, as was their custom. The conversation was about the possibility of moving from Georgetown to the house we had in Longford Mills near Orillia. Both parents were truly retired and the opportunity to move presented itself. Mom was not keen on it, but Dad was thinking of it. In the conversation as they sat beside each other on the couch, Mom turned to Dad and said, “But Kevin, all of our friends are in Georgetown.” Without missing a beat, Dad turned back to Mom and said: “Sure, Marie, most of our friends are dead.”

That little anecdote, true or not, but as I remember it, maybe sums up Dad’s feelings about death. He was not being flippant but realistic. He saw death as a natural progression of life. Sad — yes. A mystery — yes. But not the end. A stage to another life, a new life.

And what is this new life? In the first reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah, from the Hebrew scriptures of our Jewish brothers and sisters, which we call the Old Testament, we hear a vision of a place where death is no more, where tears are wiped away — on God’s holy mountain a feast is prepared for all people.

This vision of Isaiah is a metaphor for hope. Most, if not all, faith traditions and religions around the world do not see our brief earthly journey as the sum total of our existence.

We continue on somehow in God

Certainly, in our Christian tradition, it is clear that we continue on somehow in God. In Matthew 22 there is the debate between Jesus and the Sadducees over the resurrection. Jesus is clear when he responds to the Sadducees, “Have you not read your scriptures — I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”; and he goes on to say, “He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”

That being said, our life here is not like in an airport lounge, reading a book, waiting till we board the plane. Our

life here is a gift to be lived to the fullest. Our life is to be shared with others — we don’t just live for ourselves. I think Kevin understood that — he shared his life with family, neighbours, church and community.

Dad worked hard all week, and yet found the time and energy on Saturday mornings to pack a trailer and pack all of us into the car for weekend camping trips.

He shared with church and community. On those Saturdays in the fall, winter and spring Dad was down at Holy Cross, busy setting up the church hall as a makeshift movie theatre — the only one in town at the time. Any old-time Georgetowners would have memories of the Saturday matinee movies in Holy Cross. All done as a way of giving something to the church.

Sharing with neighbours — There were those times Dad might have been peacefully dozing on a Sunday afternoon, and a neighbour would drive in, knock on the door and say, “Sorry to disturb you, Kevin, but I’m having trouble with my carburetor. Do you have a moment to look at it?”

So what of Kevin now? We don’t fully know, of course, but again from the scriptures God gives us an insight. From the second reading today, the first letter of John, we hear: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”

No more broken cars to fix, no more movie matinees to arrange; the hustle and bustle of camping trips are long past.

One of my favourite prayers is from Cardinal Newman:

“May he support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in his mercy, may he give us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last.”

In this Mass we hear some beautiful hymns. These hymns, beautifully sung, are but a shadow of the hymns Kevin now hears. His deafness is gone; the twinkle is back in his eye as he sits with his beloved Marie on God’s holy mountain. Death is no more, the cares and troubles are ceased, only peace and tranquility and, above all, love on the holy mountain of God, our God of the living. ■