

Funeral for Frank Mauro

Born: May 26, 1920 Died: May 7, 2009 Age: 88 years

Gospel: Matthew 25 : 31-40

Homily:

How often Frank would come up to us, pat us on the face, and say: “You son of a gun, you!” His warmth was so endearing. So many people knew the love he showed in his joyful, welcoming ways. Because Frank was always so glad to say hello, it is no wonder that it is so difficult for us to say goodbye to him.

So we pray for Teresa, for Frank’s children and grandchildren, for each and every member of his family and extended family during this difficult time. And we pray for each other, because we know that the parish family of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has lost a dear, dear son.

Frank was baptized on June 20, 1920 in the old church building here on these grounds by Father Nicola Santoro. I learned that his baptismal name was Felippo Francesco, undoubtedly because he was born on May 26th ~ the Feast of Saint Philip Neri.

Some time ago, I read about Saint Philip Neri. In many ways, Frank shared the saint’s wonderful attributes.

Saint Philip Neri was cheerful in his work. Ponder the more than fifty years Frank worked in the family business here in Niles known as Mauro’s Sales and Service. He was the Maytag repairman. Many, many people in this city comment so very favorably concerning how Frank took care of them so well.

Saint Philip Neri was also known for his marvelous sense of humor. Frank loved to tease and laugh. He enjoyed bantering about politics. He has been described as one “kind of like everyone’s big brother.”

One day less than seventy-eight years before Frank died, Bishop Joseph Schrembs of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland visited this very church building and prayed that the Holy Spirit might descend upon Frank, Teresa, and their many classmates who celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation that Friday, May 8th, 1931.

Did Frank respond well to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in his life? As we prepare to commend him to the everlasting care of God, I am sure we can say that he responded so very well. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy, and Frank personified this attribute.

He and his classmate Teresa professed their marriage vows to each other nearly 10 ½ years after that. In the presence of Father Joseph Saraceno and their family members and friends, they promised to love one another until death do they part. That wedding day on October 11, 1941 was such a special time in the lives of Frank & Teresa. It began more than sixty-seven years of marriage. But already the couple knew each other so well. In fact, Teresa's mother used to carry baby Teresa to see baby Frank in this very neighborhood so long ago.

It has been said that the world is a sadder place without Frank Mauro among us. Truly, the parish will miss his goodness. For so many years, Frank spent so many hours helping with the Parish Festival. He drove the school bus. Frank really enjoyed helping with the Scout program. He served here as an usher and for some time as an officer in the Men's Society. His generosity touched the hearts of many.

All of us know that he was able to keep so busy after his retirement. He loved to come to church every day when he could. He read three or four newspapers each day.

Even after he retired, Frank was always so ready and so willing to lend a hand. This helpful spirit led me to choose the Gospel story that was proclaimed a few moments ago. Jesus said that whatsoever we do to the least of people, we do unto the Lord Himself. The heavy burden of grief is made lighter for us when we realize that Jesus is so willing to greet Frank and say: "Come on in! We know each other well! We've met so many times before!" Earth is a sadder place that Frank is gone, but Heaven is so much happier.

And we can imagine Frank giving the Lord a big hug, then embracing his loved ones who have completed this journey before him. I think Frank would say something to the effect of: "Well, what you know about that!"

And knowing Frank, he'd say: "Let's say a prayer for Teresa, my family and my friends. I want them to know I'm okay. I'm not as helpless as I was these past few months. I'm not suffering anymore. I'm at peace. My joy will never end. And I'll always be in their hearts."

And as Frank and his departed loved ones pray for us, we say a prayer of thanksgiving for Frank's life. Oh, saying goodbye is never easy. We know that all too well. But we take comfort that those who love Frank who have been waiting for him are so glad to say hello. His goodness assures us that kindness, warmth, and love never die. These qualities dwell forever in our hearts, and they live on every time we reach out to others as we think about Frank.

If we listen carefully, we'll perceive Frank whispering in our hearts in a gigantic but gentle way: "It's true! Every time you do something kind for someone, you do it for Jesus! The Lord Himself just told me, and He'll be telling you again and again, and again!"