

Funeral homily for John Chomyz

May the words of the Hebrew poet, the Psalmist, bring you comfort: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted".

May the Words of Our Lord from his Sermon on the Mount, bring you comfort in your time of mourning: "Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted".

In the era of the American economic depression, the 1930's, one of the most popular comic strips in the Sunday newspaper was "Little Orphan Annie". Annie, an adorable red-headed child, is a resilient youth who, despite many setbacks, remains cheerful and hopeful amid adversity. She is befriended by "Daddy" Warbucks, her benefactor, and enjoys the company of her pet dog, Sandy.

The comic strip was the inspiration behind a Broadway musical and later, a motion picture. The signature song of the musical is "Tomorrow". Annie's optimistic view of life is reflected in the words of the song:

The sun'll come out tomorrow
Bet your bottom dollar
That tomorrow there'll be sun
The sun'll come out
Tomorrow
So you'll have to hang on till tomorrow
Come what may

After the sun sets, it does not cease to exist, but is only hidden from us until it rises again the following day. In the 30th Psalm, the poet writes, "At dusk, weeping comes for the night but at dawn there is rejoicing"

When John Chomyz passed away a couple of days ago, it seemed as if the sun set, only to be followed by intense darkness for the members of his family. But as surely as the dawn follows the long night of suffering and death, so do we believe that "If we die with Christ, we shall live with him forever".

Edith Stein was a German scholar, a respected teacher of philosophy, the author of many fine books and a convert to the Catholic faith. After her conversion, she entered a cloistered religious community of Carmelite nuns. At the end of the Second World War, she and her sister, Rosa, also a convert were arrested by the German Gestapo, and later transported by train to the infamous concentration camp, Auschwitz. Her parting words were overheard. "Rosa, let us go for our people".

The train made a stop at Schifferstadt. Edith (Sister Benedicta of the Cross) noticed one of her former students on the platform. Hoping to convey a message to her anxious community back at the monastery, she said, "Tell my sisters that I am on my way to the East, towards the dawn" Her message could not have been clearer. The sun rises in the East. She was on her way to eternity.

As Christians, our hope is that a new day dawns. And, according to the seer in the Book of Revelation, "night will be no more (Rev. 21:23)". As we mourn his death, "a light shines in the darkness" (2 Cor. 4:6). It is the radiant light of the risen Christ.

I shall always remember John on the day of the sun, Sunday. For many years he served our parish community as an usher. In addition, he and a few others counted the collection the following day.

Jesus said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world (Mt. 5:14)". In the time allotted him by our benevolent Lord, John was truly a light for his family, his parish and close friends and his many comrades in the military.

He will be missed.

May the perpetual light of God shine on him for all eternity. Amen.