

IN SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION TO ETERNAL LIFE, WE ARE GATHERED HERE IN THANKSGIVING FOR THE LIFE AND WITNESS AMONG US OF FATHER RONALD J. LYNCH + WHO IN THIS LIFE WAS A LOVING SON, BELOVED BROTHER AND UNCLE, FAITHFUL PARISH PRIEST AND FRIEND EXTRAORDINAIRE!

St. Paul knew when "the time for his departure had come" and so did Fr. Ron. A few weeks ago, after initially spending time in the hospital, and then in a rehab center, and then a few days at home trying with the help of friends and family to re-establish a routine, then back to the hospital, and finally to Valley View Nursing Home, Ron realized that it would not be possible for him to recover and he told the caregiver who worked so hard to make him comfortable, "I have reached the end of my days." And so he had, but what an extraordinary journey his length of days was!

Fr. Ron was born in Lewistown in 1935 he grew up in this town and attended public schools with several of the people who are in the congregation today. Then, he was just "Ronnie" to everyone who knew him. When Fr. Ron was a boy, economic conditions were not at all good for his family. While the Great Depression was ending nationally, in small rural communities like this one, depression-like conditions continued for a least a decade after larger areas had fully recovered. Because money was so scarce at home, Ron was deeply grateful his entire life for a local grocer who always gave an extra measure of hamburger, firmly packed "down when his mother sent him to buy the single pound that she could afford, the grocer's kindness made sure there would be enough to go around. When he was in high school, Ron was given a number of work shirts that had belonged to an uncle. They fit all right but all were grey, making do, Ron bought dye and created several colors for the same style shirt and wore them to school. Fr. Ron's love of service and worship in the church began at a very early age. He was quite young his Mother died so Ron spent time with his maternal grandmother. She often took him to Pentecostal tent meetings and revivals that were held in nearby communities. He thought that the preachers were pretty scary, but he loved the excitement of the meetings and always, and especially he loved the music. In fact it was music that brought Fr. Ron into the Episcopal Church. At some point, he found out that at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, there was a boy choir he was very interested because he loved to sing. Then he heard even more wonderful news, news that made his little heart soar. He was told that that IF a boy were accepted in the choir, AND if he were faithful about attending

choir rehearsals after school, at the end of the week, that boy would receive a pay packet with 5 cents inside! Ron's lifelong love and service to the Episcopal Church began there and then... right here actually! Graduating high school in 1953, Fr. Ron worked for a couple of years in a local hardware store and at a men's clothing shop, but he quickly discovered that without better opportunities for earning money, he could not support himself. So in 1956 Ron joined the Air Force where he served as clerical support staff. This training served him well his entire life. After his Air Force career Ron headed for Shippensburg College where he earned a bachelors degree in Business Education. He also played the bass drum in the Shippensburg Marching Band. While in college, his association with the Church deepened he was active in the Canterbury Club and began to feel a clear call to vocation. Fr. Adie Kahl was Priest at St. Mark's at that time, and he encouraged Ron and endorsed his candidacy for priesthood. Fr. Ron entered Virginia Seminary where he was awarded an MDIV in 1967. He was ordained deacon in this church on the Day of Epiphany and the light of Christ would grant him many epiphanies throughout his many years of ministry.

Truly Fr. Ron's service to the church is both extraordinary and exemplary. He first served as an associate at St. John the Baptist, York, where he worked mainly as pastor to youth. Youth ministry was dear to his heart throughout his life. He served so many years as registrar for Diocesan Youth Conferences that he became a fixture and was truly beloved by the conferees. One former conferee upon hearing of Ron's death, wrote, "it feels as if Diocesan Youth Conferences were just yesterday, I will always remember how sincerely Fr. Ron cared for the youth of our diocese, how sweet, invested and fun he was, and how much wisdom he had....(I will remember) his genuine smile, and his printed conference tee shirts. He will be missed and he will be fondly remembered." I know that this is exactly the sentiment of many, many young Episcopalians all across this diocese this week. Ron was also sincerely invested in ministry to those in prison and to those who were mentally afflicted. After leaving his charge at St. Andrew's, Shippensburg, in 1983, Fr. Ron became chaplain for the Mississippi State Penitentiary graduating from the State Police Academy there as a part of his training for that Job. His time in that ministry made deep and lasting impressions on him and created a certain unflappable presence in the face of possible danger from a troubled soul. Once while supplying in a local parish, an emotionally disturbed parishioner came into the church threatening murder against another person in the congregation

and against a local clergy person. Fr. Ron turned to the intruder and said calmly, "we will have no talk of murder here. Please sit down and when the service is over I will come down and talk to you" After the service Ron directed the people near him to go into a meeting area, lock the door and call the police. But Ron went into the Nave, and sat in the pew beside the troubled individual talking quietly with him until the police arrived to take him to get the professional help he needed. Faith in God's protective presence gave Ron the gift of personal courage and a strong belief in the holiness of all people which served him well in so many situations. It was this courage that prompted him to go to Japan as a member of a visiting clergy exchange that was a part of our diocesan companion relationship with the Nippon sei ko Kai. He was willing to go to the other side of the globe although he did not know the language, or have any idea of what to expect culturally because he believed deeply in the value of the companion relationship. He made many lasting friendships with the people there and revisited many times. Just last fall Ron made his final trip to Japan. Asked if he were sure that he was physically up to the trip. He said, " I'm not sure, but I want to make one last visit to see the people"...he wanted to say goodbye to old friends.

Service to the Church was certainly the defining value of Fr. Ron's life. The blessings of his forty- five years of ministry to parishes and his service on many committees, and commissions of this diocese are not really measurable. The parishes he served extend nearly from one end of the diocese to the other, from York, to, Shippensburg, to Huntingdon, to Tyrone, to Hollidaysburg, and finally, back to Lewistown. Fr. Ron was faithful pastor and friend to every parish he served and he was always deeply grateful for the many small kindnesses the parishioners showered on him. Today, it is especially appropriate that his earthly journey of faith which began in this parish, end in this parish. He grew up under the shadow of the cross on the top of this church and that cross has guided him his entire life, giving him an abiding confidence in the grace and goodness of God and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fr. Ron left this life just as the dawn was breaking last Friday morning and entered into the sweet and beautiful awe that surely comes from being in the presence of the Infinite. He continues his spiritual journey no longer having any concerns about externals. He is free, free from doubts, free from physical limitations, completely free from all of the burdens of this world. As St. Paul reminds us, there is nothing, "not death, nor life, nor

angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come nor anything else in all of creation that will be able to separate him from the love of God" We know that because Christ lives Ron lives also and that he will increase more and more in the knowledge and love of God as he moves from strength to strength, from perfection to perfection and from joy to joy in the glorious company of all the Saints. We who had the privilege to know him have gained a certain measure of grace from the effervescence that was his life. May we share that grace with others as a continuing memorial to Fr. Ron and as a way of celebrating his life among us,

LET US BLESS THE LORD

AMEN.

dmc 6/23/2013