

**William "Bal" Balanaztegui Funeral
December 8, 2019**

**In the name of the God of all Creation,
The God alive in each of us as God was alive in Jesus,
And the power of God known in the Spirit. Amen.**

Several years ago, I was worshipping with my wife, Caren, at Temple Bet Yam, the Reformed Jewish synagogue on Wildwood Road. While looking through their Prayer Book I came across this poem. It is called "Epitaph"... it is by Merrit Malloy.

When I die
Give what's left of me away
To children
And old men that wait to die.

And if you need to cry,
Cry for your brother
Walking the street beside you.
And when you need me,
Put your arms
Around anyone
And give them
What you need to give to me.

I want to leave you something,
Something better
Than words
Or sounds.

Look for me
In the people I've known
Or loved,
And if you cannot give me away,
At least let me live on in your eyes
And not your mind.

You can love me most
By letting
Hands touch hands,
By letting bodies touch bodies,
And by letting go
Of children
That need to be free.

Love doesn't die,
People do.
So, when all that's left of me
Is love,
Give me away.

☐

When I read that poem for the first time, I knew it was something that I would want to have read at my own funeral, then I forgot about the poem. Well, recently, I found it again, and it seemed very fitting for this occasion and this man. It seems to me that I can hear Bal saying those words ... "so, when all that's left of me is love, give me away."

William "Bal" Balanzategui was a loving husband, father, cousin, and friend. He was an exceptional student ... at least the second time around; a successful businessman working at a job he loved; and a devoted churchman.

Pat and Bal met on a blind date in Pensacola while Bal was enlisted in the Navy. The date went awry for reason beyond either Pat's or Bal's control. But, Bal's mother told him that to be polite he should always ask a blind date out a second time, and then let the woman say no if she didn't want to further the relationship. So, Bal called Pat up and asked her out again ... and Pat said yes ... and they were married for over 50 years.

Before the Navy, Bal had spent a year at the University of Florida, but didn't like college, and felt that he wasn't doing well in his classes. However, military service, and marriage has a way of changing things. So, after six-and-a-half years he left the Navy, and reentered the University of Florida. This time he exceeded even his expectations, and before graduation was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Now, before Bal gets all the credit, it should be noted that his typist, grammar editor, and spellchecker was Pat.

After getting his degree, Bal worked for a number of firms in management, and even opened, with Pat, his own consulting company. But the job he loved the most ... from which he retired ... was as a managing partner in an architecture firm ... running the company while others drew up the plans.

Bal was also a faithful Christian. This is Bal's Book of Common Prayer from the Episcopal Church. The Prayer Book was presented to Bal at his confirmation when he was 12 years old,

on May 16, 1954. On the inside is the signature of the Suffergan Bishop of the Diocese of Southeast Florida ... the Rt. Rev. Martin Bram ... the bishop who confirmed Bal. The Prayer Book has two red ribbons in it, and when Pat recently pulled it off the shelf in her home she found one of the ribbons marking the hymn "Crown Him with many crowns" ... the hymn we sang as we entered this sacred space. I will be using Bal's Prayer Book for some of the prayers later in this service. Bal's life in the church included acolyte, youth group leader ... along with Pat ... and Vestryman.

Bal and Pat moved to St. Augustine five years ago. Pat and Bal had two and a half wonderful years in this neighborhood, and then Bal suffered a stroke, from which he never fully recovered. Death under these circumstances is difficult ... death is always difficult ... but in cases like this there is a tension between the pain of the loss, and the relief for Bal that he is no longer suffering.

Bal was surrounded by his family when he died. He departed this life gently and peacefully. And, the loss we feel today is mixed with the joy of knowing he is now in a better place.

These are the words from the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer:

The liturgy of the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised.

The liturgy, therefore, is characterized by joy, in the certainty that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This joy, however, does not make human grief unchristian. The very love we have for each other in Christ brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend. So, while we rejoice that one we love has entered in to the nearer presence of our Lord, we sorrow in sympathy with those who mourn.

The prayers of this service reflect the joy of new life for Bal, and they provide a comfort to us who grieve.

In the Jewish faith Kaddish is a set of prayers that are included in daily worship, and they are also said during the period of mourning, and on the anniversary of the death of a loved one. The poem that I read at the beginning of my remarks is from meditations before saying Kaddish from the Reformed Judaism Prayer Book. I will read it again. It is titled Epitaph:

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And old men that wait to die.

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Walking the street beside you.
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Put your arms
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Love doesn't die,
People do.
So, when all that's left of me
Is love,
Give me away.

I will end with one of Bal's favorite sayings, "Onward, and upward!"

Amen.