

## Memorial Service for Wayne

In the name of the Divine Mystery, who made us, who loves us, and who travels the way with us.

You may think that I am offering Wayne up for canonization as I speak this evening, but that is our privilege at a Wake. We can look at our friend, Wayne, – as Rilke puts it – chaff and grain together, keep what it worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness, blow the rest away. With Wayne, there is simply much worth keeping.

“Life is short. We do not have much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us. So, be quick to love; make haste to be kind.” That snippet from Henri Amiel, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Swiss poet and philosopher, holds the opening words of what became Wayne’s signature blessing in this house of prayer. Many others have used those words. But none of us here will ever use or hear them again without thinking of Wayne. And in all the times he spoke them or we heard them, I do not think any of us saw this day coming.

What I have seen repeatedly, though, in the multitude of tributes made on Facebook, or the comments I or others have received in email messages, or thoughts expressed in conversations – is that Wayne followed the advice he gave. He was quick to love; he made haste to be kind. He was intent on gladdening the hearts of those he met on life’s journey.

But it was not the philosopher's words that led him to live life as he did. It was another's words that Wayne took most seriously: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." That command of Jesus is what was behind Wayne's swiftness to love, his haste to be kind. It was *as he had been loved by God* that he tried to love others. And that was the love which drove him to preach about justice and social responsibility and our call to care for others. That was the love behind his joining the pilgrimage on the Migrant Trail and demonstrations on the campus of CMU. That was even the love behind him becoming Julia Child one Sunday to get his homiletic point across!

In his life that was up and down and all around, Wayne finally came to know what Paul said to the Romans: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Will addiction or lifestyle or gender or sexuality or anything else? Wayne had come to the same assurance as Paul: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us...For I am convinced that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Wayne was convinced of that – that *nothing* can separate us from the love of God. And that is the love he tried always to live.

Wayne worked at making everyone feel welcome – how many times have we sung "All are Welcome" here? He worked at widening his own world to include folks up and down the ladder of success. He was as comfortable in the soup kitchen as he was with fine dining – although in all honesty he did really enjoy fine food – and was superb at preparing it himself, often accompanied by Harry's homemade bread!

Wayne had a passion for the art of cooking, and for the *fine* arts. He did not simply open the doors of St. John's to the choral scholars – he opened his home and his heart. And by hosting “Just Cookies” nights, he made space for those students who found with Wayne and Harry a safe space in which to simply *be*.

As he practiced weaving himself, gifting many friends with the fruits of his labors, Wayne let God weave one great fabric out of the many strands of his life. The point here is that he reached out to all people, to love them as best he could, because that is how he felt loved by God. He wanted you to know that nothing could separate you from God's love.

God, for Wayne, was big – and most likely got bigger all the time. The conclusion of Wayne's blessing varied from time to time, but it always included something close to this: “And may the Divine Mystery, who is beyond our understanding but who made us, who loves us, and who travels the way with us, be with you and remain with you always.” It was not that the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were insignificant or passé to him. Rather, he needed to use language that let God be the Mystery that God is – beyond our understanding, but always creating, loving, and being with us.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.” Wayne knew about laying down his life. Part of that understanding came when he was ordained deacon and then priest, and when he came here to serve as Rector. You all have or know of stories of how Wayne touched the lives of those around him, when he put their needs above his own.

Perhaps we saw it most clearly when he retired a bit earlier than he had planned, because it seemed best for Harry. Yes, Wayne knew about laying down his life in big and small ways.

And perhaps that is part of what Harry was saying when he told me what he said to people at the hospital: I tell them, “I am an Episcopalian. We practice this every week when we celebrate the death and resurrection of our brother Jesus.”

We heard Jesus say in the gospel, “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.” In the case of Wayne and this community, St. John’s chose Wayne and Wayne chose St. John’s. But God has chosen us each and all – to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. We are – all gathered here – part of the fruit Wayne yielded. I would very likely not have made the leap into the Episcopal Church had it not been for Wayne’s and Harry’s persistence. Yes, we are each and all part of Wayne’s fruit. And our most profound gift of appreciation to him is for us to bear fruit ourselves. As you share refreshments in the parish house, share your stories of how Wayne bore fruit in your lives.

And sing - with as much gusto as you can – the General Seminary Hymn – Wayne’s favorite, knowing that he has kept those promises and is keeping them still.

Let us remember what Wayne told his by his life, that nothing can separate us from God’s love. And then let us dare to love one another as we *have* been loved.

May it be so.