

FUNERAL SERMON FOR WILLIAM S. RENTZ, NOVEMBER 12, 2018

When I think of Bill, these are some of the words of Holy Scripture that come to my mind:

“My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exulted in the Lord” 1 Samuel 2:1

“My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, exulting in His deliverance” Psalm 34:9

“My heart rejoices in God my Savior” Luke 1:47

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Psalm 118:103

Bill grew up in Maplewood. Often life takes us on many different roads and to faraway places. Often we spend our lives working and living in places far from our childhood home. Wherever life took Bill, and wherever Bill went, in his heart there always burned, like a warm and glowing lamp, the love and memories that he cherished of St. Basil's. As Bill traveled the course of life, he came to discover and love many things. He deeply loved and cherished his dear wife Pat and his children Tamara and Michael, and a huge piece of his heart was given to them. Bill was ecstatic when Mary Elizabeth was born, and she took another huge chunk of his heart. Likewise, he exulted with the birth of his second grandchild, Eron Michael, and there was still plenty of room left in Bill's heart for love. You see, Bill always had a place for love and affection, because Bill had a big heart. Bill never forgot his first love, and that was God and the Church. The lessons instilled in Bill by Fr. Horsky, Bill's parents, by serving in the altar as a young man and worshipping at St. Basil's, these all instilled in Bill's heart a deep faith. Bill's time was occupied in his lifetime with various occupations of business. Yet always Bill continued to love God. His dream was that someday he and Pat would return to Maplewood, and Bill could renew the experience of his first love. Retirement is usually a time that we look forward to as a time of leisure, rest and recreation. After Bill retired, he chose a completely different path. Bill chose to dedicate and spend the rest of his years serving and working as hard as he could for God and for the Church in his hometown of Maplewood. When Bill came home he dove right in. There was no task too big or too small for Bill. If Bill saw something, anything, that needed to be done, he would do it. It could be coming to every church service early to light the lamps and unlock the doors. It could be fixing or repairing something. It could be shoveling snow. It could be trimming bushes and cutting grass. It could be ringing the church bells. It could be helping on the Parish council and teaching Church school. I could go on for hours just trying to list all the things that Bill did to help the church. As Archbishop Michael pointed out, Bill also attended all of the educational lectures and retreats offered by our Diocese, and he attended every Diocesan Assembly and tried to attend every All-American Council as well. Bill would visit our shut-ins every week, and bring them antidor (the blessed bread) and a church bulletin. Bill would drive parishioners to church who otherwise had no way of getting here. Yet, as busy and occupied as he was with all of his service and dedication to St. Basil's, he always made time to drive to Ohio or to Texas to visit his children and grandchildren. It was very important to Bill that his children and grandchildren would follow his example of love of God and the church. And he and Pat did whatever they could to lead their family on that path. Bill wanted his children and grandchildren to experience the same joy and happiness that serving the Lord gave him. Bill understood well that there is no greater happiness in this world, and he yearned that his family would be part of that happiness.

My first encounter with Bill was when I received a phone call. *“How are you?”* I was asked in what I presumed was a Texas drawl. Bill asked me to visit his mom Tessie, who at that time was at the Albany County Nursing Home. When Bill's mom fell asleep in the Lord, I met Bill for the first time when he came to Maplewood for the funeral, a very tall man wearing cowboy boots. Bill had much love and respect for all clergy, from Bishops to readers. He served as an auditor for our Diocese and supported our bishop and the Diocese in any way that he could. He likewise supported our choir director Michael Mellin. I can't even begin to describe how much support and help he gave me over the years. In a lifetime I could never repay all that he

has personally done for me, and the man that he was, he wouldn't want anything in return anyway, because what he did was done out of love and respect. Everywhere I look I am reminded of Bill, from the icons that he painted in icon class which hang in the back of the church, to the desk and bookcases that he built for me in my office in the rectory. I will give you only one example out of a million of a way that Bill and Pat showed love to me. When I was awarded the jeweled cross, Vladika asked me if I already had a cross. For those of you who may not know, priests in the Russian Orthodox Church receive awards for years of service. The Holy Synod awarded me with the right to wear a jeweled cross. The catch is that the bishops don't supply you with a jeweled cross. You have to acquire one on your own. In America these crosses average perhaps a \$1000 or more and are very expensive. So when Vladika asked me if I had a cross, I answered no, that I would borrow one for the ceremony and obtain my own at a later time. Vladika said don't worry about it, we'll see what we can do. I found out later that Vladika called Bill, informed him that I was to receive the jeweled cross, and that the parish should buy one for me. Some of the parishioners chipped in and Bill and Pat drove to St. Tikhon's monastery to buy a cross for me. Vladika happened to be in the bookstore when Bill and Pat were purchasing the cross. Pat told the worker in the bookstore that she wanted the best cross that they had. Vladika told me that Bill and Pat selected the most attractive cross that was for sale. Vladika told me how impressed he was by the love of Bill and Pat that they showed to me. And as I said, that is only one story out of a million.

Much more important than my memories and experiences, however, are the love and memories of Bill's family. There was the time when Bill drove to Ohio on a very special mission, and nothing could stand in his way. It was absolutely necessary that Bill dress up like Santa Claus for Mary Elizabeth. When Mary Elizabeth was asked where grandpa was, she silently pointed to the man in the red suit. Mary Elizabeth and Bill used to love to watch Curious George together. Bill and Pat liked to visit Lake George and they often celebrated their wedding anniversary there. Bill and Pat took Mary Elizabeth boat riding on Glen Lake in John Plaskon's boat. Bill would do anything for that little girl. "Grandpa, let's go to Wal-mart." "OK." "Grandpa, let's go to Dunkin' Donuts." OK. Anything for Mary Elizabeth. Those are just some of the stories that I heard, but Pat and her family cherish many of their own special memories. These memories will keep Bill close to his family for all time, because love transcends life and death.

On behalf of myself, the parish of St. Basil's, Archbishop Michael and the Diocese of NY and NJ, I wish to express our sincerest love and sympathy to Pat and all her family. May our faith in the Resurrection console you at this time. Our hope is the inheritance of eternal life. May our merciful Savior grant eternal rest and peace to our beloved and ever-memorable Bill. May our Lord console us with our faith and with the hope that all of us will be reunited one day in the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.