

November 18, 2020

Yesterday, it was our privilege to attend to the funeral liturgy of Mar Mae McBroom who was refused funeral rites at one of our neighboring parishes so fortune smiled on us and I got to know about this temple of the spirit who graced the earth for 92 years with her presence and I want to tell you just a bit about her but first, as is my custom, a few words.

The Bible every book and taken as a whole is a literary text written by ordinary people trying to give expression in words and language to experiences that they were having and had with other ordinary people that were not at all like any other experiences that they were having or had had.

So Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were not quoting Jesus as much as they were telling stories of what they experienced that related to their knowledge, affection, and confusion about this Jesus person.

The Gospels, indeed, all of Sacred Scripture is essentially stammering, words that tell but immediately don't tell of what they write and speak. That's why we have four gospels and not just one and 150 Psalms and 68 Prophetic texts not to mention Letters, Revelation and 5 Books of the Pentateuch and thousands of years of people living and dying believing that these texts taken in their entirety merit our attention.

Now conventional religion likes commandments and rules and precepts and policies and all manner of easily verifiable stuff that above all does not stammer but clearly and unambiguously puts it right there but that is not going to get many to the Heart of it All, The Sacred Heart, if any at all.

It is in the stammering that we come to LOVE, only in the halting incompleteness of our own experience, our awareness of unsatisfied desires and unfinished conversations and the pain of loss and separation.

She had 7 children, 15 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren among many other family members and legions of friends as so I am told.

She taught piano and loved the Cubs, a double curse in life that she obviously used as her penance to assemble her good and generous heart that allowed her to care for a grandson with a rare disease until his death in adulthood,

teach CCD at Our Lady of Knock, and help tend to her family in various and sundry ways.

But in my mind her most enduring contribution to manifesting the abundance of The Holy Trinity on this earth was that she for some years managed the Shakeys in Calumet City.

Now many of you have no idea what I am talking about but Shakys was an all-you-can-eat pizza buffet, large tables, relatively inexpensive, and delicious food that while fast was served in an atmosphere that was solicitous, thoughtful, and fun.

Shakys was the destination of choice for legions of Little League teams, grade school basketball teams, volleyball teams, birthday parties, family celebrations, funeral luncheons, anniversary parties, and all manner of ordinary and extra-ordinary celebrations of human occasions, events, and tomfoolery, not to exclude the legions of high school kids that flocked there to fuel up for all kinds of assignments that called them to adult agonies and ecstasies.

Mrs. Mc Broom, a whimsical name, perhaps, that matched her great vocation as a Catholic disciple of Christ in the real world feeding the multitudes, bring joy to the joyless, hope to the hopeless, and all manner of Peace On Earth and Good Will to Men (sic).

Shakys was a bit like what I think Jesus had in mind when he told us that “the Kingdom of God was at hand.”

The Sacred Scriptures help us figure out what it might all be about but it is best to probe the Scriptures with a happy heart, a real hunger, and in good company and we were in good company yesterday with Mar Mae and her living legacy even though we were masked and distanced, I felt as if we weren't.

For those of you, few, I am sure, who have any idea what I am talking about, you can find on YouTube a video of Shakys final demolition as those even older than me, can find of the final moments of Phil Smidt's a Shakys kind of place in its time.