

Eulogy for Ed Morgan
Saint John's Cathedral
7 January 2023

Over the years that I was privileged to work with Ed and particularly in conversations with others since his death last month, I have heard more wonderful words used to describe him than I can count.

He has been described as one who was “down to earth,” “unassuming,” “humble,” “honest,” “real,” and “true.” His thoughtful and consistent pastoral care has been praised. He has been called “a priest’s priest.” For those of us who worked with him he was a constant, committed, skilled, and faithful colleague of great integrity. And he was funny. (Everyone I know has commented on his sense of humor.)

When Ed was leaving Saint Bartholomew’s in Estes Park to take a new position in Little Rock, he began his announcement to the parish with a joke.

“Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,” he wrote. “The priest of a parish church was called to be the rector at another church. ‘The same God who sent me to you,’ the priest announced, ‘is now calling me away.’ There was a moment’s silence, and then the congregation rose and began to sing, ‘What a Friend We Have in Jesus.’”

Ed liked to laugh, and he knew the value of laughter. He was one who embraced his priestly vocation as a sacred trust and took his responsibilities seriously, but at the same time, he never took himself too seriously. That is wisdom. Ed brought an atmosphere of grace, good humor, and joy to all the staff in the bishop’s office, to his colleagues, and to the parishioners he served. He was a person who grounded his life in prayer, arriving early virtually every morning so far as I can recall, to say the Daily Office here in Saint Martin’s Chapel. Most of all, Ed also understood and honored his primary calling and principal vocation—a husband to Sara for nearly fifty-five years; a devoted father to Krista and Andy; a loving grandfather to Kaelynn, Molly, Sadie, Trevor, Justin and Taylor. Ed’s life traces a trajectory marked by the care, the thought, the kindness, indeed the great love, that was his heart. That love, incarnate, is the golden thread woven throughout the tapestry of our collective lives by Ed. Indeed, it is that love that draws us all here this morning.

The words of praise for Ed are high praise indeed. They are all expressions of a collective gratitude—the deep affection, the abiding respect, the lasting joy—that so many of us have for the privilege and gift of sharing at least some portion this life’s journey with him. As one longtime friend and close colleague said to me this week, “We have lost a saint.”

Ed Morgan: a respected priest of this diocese, a beloved Canon to the Ordinary on three different occasions serving two Bishops of Colorado, would at this point balk at being so enshrined. The fact is, Ed tended to prefer a different description, most frequently choosing to refer to himself simply as a “loose Canon.”

It was my privilege to know Ed for the past forty years as our lives intersected in various ways here in Colorado. Ed was ordained a deacon, right here, on these steps, in this Cathedral in June of 1983 by Bishop Bill Frey. Six months later the Suffragan Bishop of Colorado, Dub Wolfrum, ordained Ed to the priesthood at Saint Joseph's in Lakewood where Ed served as the Curate until 1985. Ed then became rector of Saint Bartholomew's in Estes Park where he served for over ten years until being called to become the rector of Saint Mark's in Little Rock, Arkansas. Toward the end of his tenure in Estes Park, Ed posed this question to the people of Saint Bartholomew's: "Does this congregation make a difference in your life? [Does this congregation make a difference] in the life of this community? [Does this congregation make a difference] in the world?" His answer, of course, was an emphatic and encouraging "yes." By simply posing the question Ed gives us a glimpse into that divine spark that inspired him throughout his ministry. It was not parochial. It was all about life. It was about giving life to others. It was about making a life-giving difference in this world by embodying in this life a transcendent vision for all life in a world desperately in need of a more transcendent vision of itself.

So he worked to develop assisted living housing in Estes Park. He founded and vigorously supported the Colorado Haiti Project (now known as Locally Haiti). He was consistently engaged in and tangibly supported the work of the Saint Francis Center with Denver's homeless population. And even in "retirement" he spent ten years as a hospice chaplain while also volunteering his time to serve as chaplain to the retired clergy of Colorado.

In 2001, Bishop Winterrowd called Ed to serve as the Canon to the Ordinary. Ed agreed to the take the job but only, as he put it, in "an interim kind of way," knowing that Bishop Winterrowd had called for the election of a new bishop and would himself soon be retiring. When I was elected Bishop in 2003, the first thing Ed did was to explain to me that he had agreed to serve as Canon to the Ordinary only in "an interim kind of way." He told me that he was happy to help me settle into Office but that he was looking forward to his own retirement and that would be happy to leave...anytime...soon. Some five years later, still Canon to the Ordinary at my insistence, Ed said to me, "Really, Rob. I'm not getting any younger. It's time." And I reluctantly I agreed. But two years later the position was vacant again, and I needed help. So I asked Ed if he would be willing to return and serve as Canon to the Ordinary in "an interim kind of way." Ed said that he would consider it, but only if there was one non-negotiable stipulation written clearly into our agreement. That stipulation? That on weekday afternoons during the Spring and Summer, when the Rockies were in town, he would be free to leave the office, head to Coors field, and take in a baseball game.

The fact is it wasn't Ed's plan or desire to stay on in the Office of the Bishop. But Ed never understood his priestly ministry as a job, or as a career, or as a profession, but truly as a divine calling, a willingness to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit into a particular way of life in the life of this extended community that we know as the Body of Christ. Ed served this diocese in that spirit—with an abundance of generosity, with great kindness and courage, with compassion and strength—and as Canon to the Ordinary he did so, as many of you know, through a deeply challenging time in our common life. For that gift I will always be grateful

personally, and by that same graceful gift of Ed's love and care we have all been blessed collectively.

It is true. We have all lost, a saint. Yes, Ed would balk that—and most likely deflect it with a joke. And I know this too—that today Ed would direct our attention to the altar around which we are gathered. He would want us to hear and to proclaim with him the unbearably good news that “Christ has died, that Christ is risen, and that Christ will come again.” And then without missing a beat, he would remind us that we too—each and every one of us—through the gift of Love are heirs of God’s kingdom, and that even now, with Ed, we are all saints in Light.

—*Amen.*