

## The Only Piece (s)

### Left Behind

Were you.

Oh, you bet. Letter after letter, missive after missive, phrase and phrase, paragraph after paragraph, page after page; a virtual torrent of words I was to say, stories about the place and much more importantly the community ...

I mean, come on folks, I had two thousand three hundred and four miles to think about it! ....About our little church at the end of Halleluiahs Row who's west and northwest vista's get a splendid view of one the most spectacular of the five greatest freshwater seas in the world. There is the magnificence of location, the history and its place in the State of Michigan Annals. But all this is no comparison to the people.

Christmas Mass will be very different this year. The thought of not being with you is...

Tough.

Never did I feel so welcome, by anyone and anywhere. It started thirty years ago when I 'chose' the little church for that reason versus Lake Leelanau. Good thing I did in the early years, because we supplied altar 'girl' and boys for many years, into high school from fifth grade. We won't talk about having to get teenagers up for an eight in the morning mass. 'Twas a miracle we did and made it on time! All three of my kids got confirmed at St. W. Two got married and two grandkids were baptized at our church!

For a decent time, we had Father Charlie. Who could not love this man? I'll tell you a short story about him. It will explain how my missives slipped somehow into our bulletin. I went to Fr. Charlie for confession soon after he arrived. Because I wanted to make sure I did not miss anything, I wrote the confession down and took it with me into the confessional. The poor priest was a bit stunned that someone would take this kind of time to prepare. He said it was a first for him!

This led to him asking me if I would write an article in the bulletin every week. We call it 'Family Thoughts.' When Fr. Hunko released me from service when he arrived, Phyllis asked me if I could do one for our bulletin at St. Wenceslaus. She even asked if I wanted to be paid! I said no, of course, because I believe for the most part it is not me doing the writing. I am just trying to report what He tells me in all His grand Triune-ness.

I remember vividly all our Chicken Dinners when I could physically participate. I still get numbers like B12 and C3 popping into my head on occasion from my two or three years of calling Bingo! And it made me sad when my body finally said no to the simplest of tasks.

Our church is a church to be proud of. I'm not talkin' pride. I speak to our willingness to be welcoming, kind, compassionate and willing to help that defines something to be truly proud of. All of us made it clear, especially our Deacon Martin and the succession of priests down to one of the best sermon givers ever. Fr. Michael. There was Fr. Charlie at first, the Fr. Hunko for a short period until Fr. Andy stepped in. What a joy it was to have him and his wonderful sermons. I even got to drive him back and forth from Peshawbestown after he told the diocese when they wanted to close us that 'he would come to say mass regardless' and he did. I believe he was preceded by Fr. Jim Fox – that dynamic Irishman who told me to never stop writing. Then Fr. Elias – who we had to break into America and Leelanau county as he was fresh from Africa. Then came Fr. Tony with all his experience. I know we had a few come and go or handle us temporarily until Fr. Michael showed up. Still watching video streams of mass from two thousand three hundred and forty seven miles away.

Mostly I remember your kindness and your welcoming of people I would bring with me, like my Mom and Dad, my sister, several others and finally Gretchen, who fell in love with you folks at first site. You made everyone feel like they were part of the family.

It was a great day when Martin became deacon and I sorely missed being a part of his ten year celebration.

Without a doubt I follow rule number two with my parish (and you will always be 'my' parish).

I will pray for you daily and I will always love all of you.

(Over)

In the true Spirit of Christmas I reached back to something I wrote almost thirty years ago and published in a book *Christmas Unwrapped* copyrighted in 1994. It is as follows...

The Breath of the Planet, The Wind, is now cold.  
It blows through the trees, the nerve endings of our home, Mother Earth.  
Shakes them.  
Makes them bend and twist and shudder.  
The air and the sky are gray.  
Bits and pieces of sea-bred magic flutter and dance.  
Solitary voyagers of pieces of white.  
White magic.

There are no sounds, except for the muffled roar of the Breath of the planet, the Wind.  
Nothing comes.  
Into my head.  
Into my heart.  
Into my Soul.  
Except Peace.

So I take a bit of this Peace.  
I pick It up.  
Hold It in my hands.  
Close to my heart.  
Squeeze It.  
Breathe It.  
Close my eyes.  
Become It.  
Offer It.  
For all of you.  
In this Season.  
That remembers.  
When It all came together.  
In a cave.  
To a teenage girl.  
And a husband who made his meager living with his hands.

Witnessed solely by shepherds, whose only roof in life were the Stars.  
Announced by Messengers of The Most High!  
Turning a simple place  
In a simple world  
Into an Explosion of  
.... ALL THAT IS!

Gloria in Excelsis Deo  
And Peace to His People On Earth!  
It came in a tiny baby.  
That forever changed the world.  
Now I offer It again to you.  
From the center of my heart.  
Peace!  
Silent Tears.  
Silent Night.  
Silent Joy!

Clement