

Rosemary, on behalf of everyone here at St. Munchin's I express my condolences to you, to Carol, Judy, Bob, Mike, Kurt and Mr. Z. You've lost a giant of a man. Bob was hard-working, proud, stern and bull-headed, might as well say it. But he had a soft heart that loved his family, clung to his faith, and desired to serve others.

He worked hard. He was chief engineer at St. Mary's Hospital, following the footsteps of his father who worked there for 52 years. Bob never took a sick day. They had to close the hospital to end his job. He could fix everything - cars, plumbing, carpentry, military vehicles - he did it all; he was never afraid to try anything.

But as hard as he worked, he loved his family. He looked out after his children, and remained devoted to his own siblings, his parents, and of course to Rosemary. Sunday was family day, and vacation meant time with the family. He loved the great outdoors.

That love brought him to our area a few years ago, where he enjoyed all that creation had to offer. He never expected this illness, but he took it in stride. He died with dignity; he did it his way - just as Jesus did on the cross.

A giant of a man was Judas Maccabee. He appears in the first reading we just heard, which comes from one of the last books to be written for the Old Testament, at a time when Jerusalem was at war to preserve its dignity. Judas Maccabee ruled Israel, and his soldiers fought bravely, but many of them died when they were young. Even though Judas was the commander-in-chief, he became the mourner-in-chief as well. He took up a collection and used it to offer a sacrifice for those who had died. Even before Jesus was born, Judas had a sense of the resurrection of the dead. He prayed for the forgiveness of their sins, and he believed that they would rise again.

His belief was adopted by Christians, and especially by Catholics, after the resurrection of Jesus. We too believe that it is a noble thing to pray for those who have died, for the forgiveness of their sins, and for life everlasting. We offer sacrifice on their behalf in the belief that God has the ability and desire to forgive sin, even the sins of those who have died. We believe our prayers can make a difference, and that is why we gather here today.

We are grateful to God for the gift of this man, but his departure causes great grief. Bob did a lot to prepare his family to carry on without him, and they will do just fine. Jesus did a lot to prepare us as well. He taught us how to live. He showed his concern for the poor, the sick and the dying. And when he himself suffered the agony of the cross, he assured us that he understands what suffering is all about, and how it can offer redemption.

We gather today in the confidence that Jesus is risen from the dead, and that he offers salvation to those who come near to him. In our prayer, we express our grief, but also our gratitude and our hope that the one who first rose from the dead will also gather Bob and all the faithful with him in that great outdoors we call heaven.