

Henry loved Irene, and living 10 years without her was probably one of the most difficult things he ever had to do. People knew Henry in different ways. He was a wonderful father, proud of his five children, and a terrific grandfather and great-grandfather. He was a respected businessman, a concerned citizen, and a faithful member of this church. But I think deep down inside, he was Irene's husband. That's who he was.

He moved around a lot from city to city. He held different jobs, and when people didn't hire him, he just went out and made it on his own for the sake of his family. Whether it was linen supplies or real estate or farming or storage or a restaurant, Henry believed in himself; he believed he could succeed at whatever he did.

Whenever I'd ask him to do something, he would just say yes – even if he was totally incompetent at it, he would do it. The biggest favor I ever asked him was to host a priest friend visiting from Uganda. Uganda! Henry didn't flinch. "Whatever you want, Father." They became fast friends. Henry opened his home, his heart and his wallet. He'd have given away his truck if he'd only found a way to drive it across the ocean.

Henry had a lot of colorful expressions, some a little too colorful to mention here. He liked good food. Well, he liked food, and he always said Irene was a great cook. Eventually all these loves took a toll on him. He ate too much. He worked too hard. He loved Irene so much that when his back gave out and his kidneys malfunctioned, and cancer appeared and then reappeared, he started to cut back. He wasn't who he used to be; he couldn't do what he used to do. It broke his heart not to help people the way he dreamed he could. He carefully selected his treatments to insure a good quality of life. And he was ready for anything. He had no worries about what lies ahead. If he was cured, great. He'd enjoy more of a wonderful life. If not, great. He was on his way to eternity with God in the company of Irene. He couldn't lose. He would succeed either way.

Holy Week helps us interpret an event like the life and death of Henry McKenzie. St. Paul says, "Just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life." Death came through Adam, but the resurrection of the dead comes through Christ. A lot of people struggle with their faith. They don't believe as strong as they used to. They don't pray as hard, they don't think of others the way they used to. Henry would want us to dry our tears and point our faces toward this Holy Week. Let us be ready to wash the feet of others as Christ did. Let us embrace suffering and death as Christ did. And let us rise, as Christ did, which we can do if we place our faith and hope in the only one who grants success to all our frail attempts. It is Christ who lives in our homes – wherever they are, Christ who equips us for work – whatever it is, and Christ who accompanies us whenever we travel from house to house, from city to city, and from earth to heaven. It is he who will say the words we long to hear, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you."