

Blessed Every Day

Reflections of our shut-in parishioner Joe Kroger, recorded by Bob Sylvester



I am ninety-two years old. The Good Lord Almighty blessed me and my wife, Marie, with ten children, nine of them still alive. Marie died in 1991 after suffering many years from polio. My home is Belle's Assisted Living in St. Albans, where I have resided for many years and have been totally confined to a bed for over six years. I worked in the insurance industry for many years and prior to that was a veteran of the United States Army.

Blessed Sacrament Parish has been my church community for most of my life. I raised my children in this church. They went to school here when there was a school. I love Blessed Sacrament and all the people in my church.

I have always felt tremendous support from the Blessed Sacrament community. Precious to my heart is the Holy Eucharist, which is brought to me each week by lay ministers from Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist is the core of my faith. I love to talk about my faith belief and to hear what others say about God. I love it when Father John Finnell comes to visit me. I am probably the healthiest patient at Belle's because of my faith belief and positive attitude about life.

When I think of my Catholic faith, I feel the presence of the Spirit within me and the omnipresence of God in three Persons all around me. I feel God looking down upon me lovingly, in the now. I am also aware of the constant presence of my Guardian Angel and the Little Flower [Saint Therese de Lisieux]. Even though I will never again get out of bed or be healed of the disease that has paralyzed my legs, I feel God's healing power every day. I feel it here especially at Belle's, where we have a small, loving community of patients and staff. We all support each other in times of joy, struggle, and sorrow.

I love watching daily Mass on television. I feel that God doesn't have anything else to say to me because I am all filled up! Also, God is like a glove. He will always be there protecting me and my soul infinitely. My glove is God's love and security.

I love listening to Father John's homilies on the CDs brought to me from Blessed Sacrament. I often listen to them over and over. I also like it when people come here and sing God's praises. Some of my favorite words are "Hosanna" and "Praise the Lord," which I repeat often.

When people talk to me about life, I always say that to know myself is to know God and to truly know God is to know myself. People sometimes have to think about that. I just smile when I see their faces because I know that God is working within them, helping them to better understand. But I always try not to push my faith on anyone.

I like it when I hear that people are going to church. If they are happy in their church I don't care what denomination they belong to.

I take life one day at a time. I wake up appreciating each day ready to meet the moments, whatever they might be. I can be full of joy each moment because I find Jesus on my shoulder every day and Jesus is in this place every day. I am able to display my happiness each day in this house and to help people here smile.

Here are some words I am pretty sure I wrote in Advent of 1999. I still like these thoughts very much.

Day to day, season to season, again and again, we have the opportunity to experience the meek, the majesty, and, yes, the miracles, and even more. Look and see - so few hours remain. Dispel fears of

unknown, painful wounds. Forsake the wells of [wandered wishes, and release the tethers of haunting bias that shadow our souls.

“Let all be arrayed, be illuminated, be amenable to all we have known and yet more to know.

“Benedictus qui venit in Nomine Domini” (Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord). Freely, gracefully flowing by His Son’s divinity and sacrifice, our ever-forgiving redemption! His eternal presence to pre-signify the Father’s benevolent Heavenly acceptance!

When people ask me the secret of living. I simply say use life as God wants you to. I’m expecting to be here two or three more years. I say that your blood should be warm. Your blood should not be chilled or frozen. You keep a warm heart with your will to Christ. He’ll give you a warm heart. Your will to Christ helps you to go on living as a human being.

God works in strange ways. I see that all around me every day. Sometimes we don’t understand why God acts the way he does. What I do know is that God has a purpose for everything he does.

God has given me my life as it is and I accept it as it is. My body might be failing, but God is helping me keep my mind. God reminds me to say my A, B, C’s often. I usually try to say the whole alphabet out loud every day. I know that helps to keep my mind active and sharp.

At my age, God has now given me a way to easily move out of my life. It’s been Jesus and me for all my life. Now, when I move on, it will be Jesus and me again.