

* Today we have gathered on the occasion of the loss of a beloved husband, beloved father, beloved uncle and dear friend, A. K. And as much as it has pleased Almighty God in His good providence to call A. from this life, let us recall the admonishing and comforting words from the Holy Scripture.

* "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day," (Joh 6:37-40).

* Friends we are just in the beginning of Spring Season. Imagine, the 3 days back from now the weather became better and you finally decide to take a walk somewhere in your nearest city park. Walking across a field you noticed many dead things under and around; the grey grass, dark brown leaves, naked trees along with empty flower beds. But you are cheerful as much as in the past you observed the seasonal process of renewing. You are pretty sure that in half month or so the grass will spring out, the trees covers their branches and flowers occupy their beds. Just after death the nature began the process of renewing. Similar to that when we see the dead body of our brother A. we believe that the process of his regeneration is already in the air.

* Thus says the Lord, Dust you are, and unto dust you will return. By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. The shocking truth is that there is no respect of persons -- poor and wealthy, known and unknown, ordinary and in authority, bad Christians and good Christians; we are all mortal.

* I saw A. in the hospital about one hour before his death. I saw how he wrestled with death. From that I conclude, A. is a strong man, he loves life and this world as God's gift for all humanity, but the power of death is much stronger than power of life in us. He couldn't talk, he was very ill. I just prayed and then I blessed him by the cross before leaving. In fact nobody can escape death, but it shouldn't be!, because God created humanity to enjoy the gift of eternal life. And this life was revealed bodily in Christ Jesus whom we are given to believe, trust and listen to.

* It is interesting that all people with whom I talked about A. told me that he was a good gardener. From my own experiences I know that a good gardener usually doesn't like weeds. R. told me that many times A. surprised her by how diligently he cleaned his garden from weeds, especially if we take in consideration his very weak eyes, then it might surprise us even more. Believe me, it is hard work to clean the weeds from a garden. Working in my garden sometimes I imagined Jesus, who cleans me from my sins very diligently and regularly. As the weeds have a very aggressive character, the same can be said about our sins, they are also aggressive; that is why they need to be taken away diligently and regularly in same way that A. did. From this point A. can be seen as a wise man.

* A. became known among us as a benevolent giver. He contributed some funds to Douglas College. You know, according to a British custom the red rose should be brought to the tomb of a person who was known by his charity and kindness. A. is a person to whom people should bring the red roses as a token of his generous contributions.

* Definitely A. had a lot of credits to be acknowledged as the good Christian but he was not a church person, even though he was baptized and confirmed. As a pastor I need to say that without means of grace such as the Absolution and the Lord's Supper it seems not possible to win the battle with the sinful flesh and Satan. I can not imagine how A. was saved and preserved for eternal life without these means of grace while he lived among us. But if we carefully examine his life we can conclude that he has the fruits that the Scripture calls the fruits of the Holy Spirit. He was loved and he loved. R. read some segments from a letter that was written and devoted to A. by his daughter, T. C. There T. expressed her intimate love to the father who knows how to care and how to share.

* There are many positive things can be said regarding A's achievements, as a veteran of World War II, as a worker, husband, father, traveler, philatelist, numismatist and talking books listener. Now let us hear what Scripture says regarding persons whose conscience is found in the will of God. "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead," (James 2:14-17). From this passage and some others we find in the Scripture I can conclude that A. was a good Christian. Finally, let us love our Lord from all our inside and our brothers in Christ because he loved us first, (1Joh 4:19). Our Lord suffered, died and was risen from the dead for our salvation, he equipped us with his Word and the Holy Spirit so that we would be able to deny ourselves and follow Jesus carrying our crosses individually and even helping some one else. And the Lord whose love is beyond all understanding will raise us from the dead on the Last Day.

Amen.