

## JUST AS I REMEMBERED

Our sermon for this Trinity Monday, in the time of the Church known as “St. Michael and All Angels,” the day when the Church located in this place for this hour remembers the Faith God gave to, and sustained in, Ella Loretta Menche, has been drawn forth from today’s readings. Hear again God declare that which the Holy Spirit wills to use to bring to you the Faith, God’s comfort, and strength:

*Faithful (is) the God, through Whom all of you were called into communion with the Son of Him, Jesus Christ, the Lord of us.<sup>1</sup>*

Howard (Donna), Warren (Elizabeth), John, family and friends of our fully-sainted sister, Ella Loretta:

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Today’s readings are most fitting to help us remember today God’s grace throughout the 10 and a half decades of earthly life He gave to Mrs. Menche. The use of that title this day is fitting. That is because Mrs. Menche was born and reared in a generation, born between A.D. 1902 and 1922, which is now called the “Silent Generation.” They understood and cherished that many facets of human interaction which have been nearly lost in the generations which have followed. The manner in which they addressed one another displayed their commitment to God’s good gifts.

Among those jewels, they discovered the joy of treasuring the God-ordained estate of holy matrimony. They desired to find unity in the home, in all its many aspects. One example of that may be understood from the reality that one Mr. Howard Menche, who desired to date one Miss E. Loretta Koenig, was to have no contact with her unless he contacted the family’s pastor and congregation! He did. Following that, like many in their generation, they were honored to call one another, “Mr. and “Mrs.”

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<sup>1</sup> *I Corinthians* 1:9.

The silent generation believed, and lived in home and community, the truth that God had instituted marriage between man and woman to be one-flesh unions that would bear much fruit. (The fruits of that union are among us today). For them, the titles “Mr.,” and, “Mrs.,” were not simply formal manners of address. They were, rather, viewed as God-pleasing, and socially honored recognitions of good life callings. In a way, their use of God-pleasing titles reflects some of that which our scriptures for today teach. Hear again our theme text for this memorial sermon:

*Faithful (is) the God, through Whom all of you were called into communion with the Son of Him, Jesus Christ, the Lord of us.<sup>2</sup>*

God’s faithfulness is revealed in His granting His Name to those whom He has called into communion with Himself. He gives to those who cling to His faithfulness the power to have true fellowship – participation – in His family. We learn to address one another as “brother and sister” as we remain in the household of our Lord. Yes, the way we refer to one another, in the church, in the community, and in our homes can be freighted with meaning. The titles we use for each other can influence how we treat one another.

Consider how God is this day, again teaching us to refer to Him. Think about how God Himself, through His called Apostle, St. Paul, records titles we are given to use for Jesus five times in our text from I Corinthians for today. You hear them today, for they are words which were among the last pastorally read to Mrs. Menche. In them, you will note, the Savior of mankind is called “Christ.” That word means, “Anointed One.”

Jesus was anointed as Prophet to declare that God-breathed prophecy about salvation was fulfilled in Himself. He was anointed Priest that He might become the Great High Priest who offered the ultimate sacrifice for sin. He shed His own blood, poured it out on the Mercy Seat of God, that you might be saved from your sins and

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<sup>2</sup> John 10:9.

named with His Name. He was anointed King, that He might reign from the seat of the Cross, having His enemies placed under His feet. He destroyed even death in His own death. He rules that you might have communion, fellowship, with Him now and in eternity.

We who are of the faith learn to call Him Christ Jesus; the Christ; the Lord of us, Jesus Christ; the Son of God – Jesus Christ – the Lord of us. Those are descriptive titles attached to His Name. They indicate His holy calling, His place above creation, His rule over us.

Titles have meaning. They inform our thinking about others, including God. That is true whether a person believes in Him or not. On the Last Day, all will bow before Him and confess Him as Jesus Christ, the Lord. To those who do believe in Him, Jesus still says,

*Truly, truly, I say to all of you: "The one continually hearing My Word, and continually believing of the One Who sent Me, has life eternal, and into judgement not he comes, but has himself passed from the death into the life."<sup>3</sup>*

Until the Day when Christ returns in the Body, on the Clouds, those who continue to believe and continue to hear the Word of God, at a minimum, address the Son of God as Jesus the Christ. We describe Who He is, and that which He has done and continues to do. Our use of His titles may also be understood among the faithful to be a polite way of speaking of, about, and to the King of the Universe.

From that divine reality, we turn back to our reflection on the traditions of polite greeting among those of the silent generation... Certainly, their use of Mr. and Mrs. were polite forms of address. Therefore, it was no surprise to me, when I first met our sainted sister, as I asked her how I might pastorally address her, she gave a generational response. I offered first, "Ella?" and received only silence. Then,

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<sup>3</sup> John 5:24.

hearkening back to that which I remembered about familiar address from my youth, I offered, “Mrs. Menche?” Her response came immediately, “That will be fine.”

Traditional is a fine way to think of that reaction to a request for personal and pastoral communication. It was traditional in a wonderful way. Such loving tradition provides consistency and stability in the home, in the workplace, in society, and in the Church.

Those two elements remain important for the very young, and the very old. They allow us to participate in human interaction when we have not learned to read or can no longer read. Consistency and stability allow us to receive and treasure the gifts of communication when our ears and senses are failing. They enable us to receive God’s gifts even when we have been apart from them for a while.

Such was the case when we first celebrated the Sacrament of the Altar in the home (John’s as I recall it) where Mrs. Menche was staying. Through the love of her sons, her family, she was being re-united with Christ Jesus through His gifts from His Table. Having heard the Word which declares Christ, having received His Body and Blood for the forgiveness of her sins, having received the Word of benediction, Ella Loretta Menche paused. Then she softly said, “That is just as I remembered.”

What a blessing! The Word of God Who is faithful, came to her in the manner which she had learned in the 1920s during her confirmation years. The Word of God, declared slowly and clearly, sustained the Faith in her, even when she could no longer see the printed text, and had difficulty in hearing the spoken Word. The tradition of the Faith, the Word of God handed faithfully from pastor-to-pastor, congregation-to-congregation, quickened her in the Faith. She received God’s Word, tasted the fruits of His passion, death, and resurrection regularly as her years continued past the century mark.

The last time God’s dear daughter Ella, received His gifts from His table – at the kitchen table in John’s house, she could not see well enough to discern the Lord’s

Tableware. She reached out slowly to handle gently each item as it was placed in preparation for the Lord's Service to her. She fingered the crucifix, and said, "Oh, yes, I know." Then, she touched the empty chalice and paten (cup and plate), and declared something like this: "I know what this is." The Holy Spirit moved her to remember, through the consistency and stability of the means of grace distributed in familiar vessels, that Jesus was coming to her, to bring her forgiveness and strengthening for the day she entered fully into blessed eternal life.

A bit over a month later, when her last hours were upon her, she heard the Word of God in her hospital room. She received His forgiveness. She reflected on the hymns sung at her bedside.

As she prepared to leave this veil of tears, Pastor Palmer made the last pastoral call she received. He recounts that she was not very communicative until he began to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven...." Then, he says, she prayed the entire prayer with him. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word, gave her strength to pray with Jesus even when she was not aware of her surroundings. When that brief service was over, she said to him, "Where am I, and how did I get here?"

We who are in Christ know the answer to that question today as it pertains to Saint Ella Loretta Menche. She is in the Presence of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, our Lord. She who had heard, some 48 hours before, the pastor sing the words of "The King of Love, My Shepherd Is," now reclines in the Lord's verdant pastures beside untroubled waters.

Hear the Word of God. Believe in the promises revealed in it. When your last hour comes, may it be declared that God saved you, gave you title to His Name, bore you through life in the Faith, and carried you fully to recline at His eternal banquet table:

*Faithful (is) the God, through Whom all of you were called into communion*

*with the Son of Him, Jesus Christ, the Lord of us.<sup>4</sup>*

Today, you are being called by God into communion with His Son. He desires you to have a place at His Table. He yearns to give you His gifts, that He might feed you the Bread of Life.

God is faithful. He wills to make you all firm in His Faith. To that end, He gives richly in this life of His Word. That leads to true knowledge, that Jesus died for you to pay the price for your sins, and rose again from the dead to present you right with the Father in heaven.

He did that for our departed sister, Saint Ella Loretta Menche. She now lacks for nothing good forever. God declares that it is His will that you might be lacking in nothing that endures forever. In His faithfulness, He continues to call you into communion with Him, and with all the saints in heaven.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Trinity XX, Monday

Funeral Service for Ella Loretta (Koenig) Menche

Psalm 23; Isaiah 46:4; I Corinthians 1:4-9; John 5:24

October 10, 2016

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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<sup>4</sup> John 10:9.