

Homily for My Dad - Larry Lisbeth

Fr. Mike Lisbeth, SM 6-19-10

Perhaps there are really only two great lessons for us to learn in this life. The first is holding on to one another; the second one is learning to let go. We hold on to one another in love, for protection, for guidance, for companionship, for reassurance. We let go to liberate the other – because now is the time to leave the nest, to choose directions of growth, to explore new possibilities.

We don't get to select the times when we must learn AGAIN these essential life-lessons. They seem to be directed by the great and mysterious plan of our loving God. Then, it is our choice either to accept this challenge from God, or try to run away from it. We know that this is not really an effective response. We can't run fast enough to run away from God. Today we recognize that God has chosen to teach us AGAIN about letting go, letting go of Larry. He is one of those "godly men" spoken about in our first reading from Sirach. A man like my Dad is truly virtuous, loving and wise. Because he has been such a wonderful Dad, or relative or friend, because he has been so very successful at holding onto US lovingly, this letting go can be a difficult moment for us.

Many life experiences put our hope to the test. It is a real challenge for us to switch over to letting go. We gather here to SUPPORT one another in our letting go. Larry is now called to a new life, fullness of life, joy and peace in God's Kingdom. We gather here to receive the very special grace of God, assisting us in letting go. Our faith, our scripture, our community here, and our Eucharist all provide us with the necessary resources to gracefully move through our letting go of Larry.

Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans is so appropriate for us to hear. Our afflictions teach us endurance. Our hope is yet another gift from God's hand. We are not created for this earth to be our permanent home. Our "parts" wear out too quickly. Our loving God will lift us, each and all, out of the afflictions of this life. God has promised an eternal home for us, to live in union with God for ever. We know that God's hope leads us to endurance. God is ready to hold onto Larry – for all time.

Our Gospel speaks so wonderfully about our God who blesses us when we mourn, when we hunger and thirst for what is right with God. Larry was such a wonderful student and friend of the simple beauty of our world. Dad loved the

birds, and gave them special attention in his life. Weekly I'd call Dad on Sunday evening. I'd take my cell phone outside, into our beautiful back yard. Dad would say, "I can hear the birds. How nice."

In the last house where Mom and Dad lived together, a cardinal would come to their side door. Every day, this cardinal would sing until Dad gave him a nut to eat. Larry spoke about how well he had trained this bird. Actually, I think it was the other way around. The bird had Larry very well-trained.

Among the many expressions of holding on and letting go, we know that Dad and Mom are together again. We kids speculate that they had a reunion date last Sunday night. Now they are side by side, where they belong, where God wants them. When our days are over, we also hope to enter a new life. For now, we allow Larry to be held in God's loving embrace. Our God has promised. Our God is true.

May God bless us [+] in our life-journey, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.