

***In Loving Memory: Red Millette***  
**Santa Maria Church, Orinda**  
**December 15, 2018**



On behalf of everyone here I want to extend our deepest sympathy to you, Marianne. Losing your devoted partner and companion of sixty-three years must be a deep sorrow that few can understand. Your blessing is the six decades of the memories of life and love shared with your husband, and those memories are yours forever. We extend our sympathy to Red's children and their families: Tim and Diane, Yvonne, Tom and Joanne, Joe and Jennifer, Tony and Dean, and Ted and Cindy; to Red's grandchildren – Amanda, Emily, Lauren, Jack, Will, Cole and Aricela; to Red's sister, Betty, and to all his extended family. Red will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved him. With you, your friends mourn your loss, but we hope that our prayer and presence this morning will ease your grief and help you to renew your faith in the Resurrection of Our Lord and the new life in Christ which Red now shares.

How often have you and I listened to someone's complaint or tale of woe, a struggle they or their loved one is experiencing and, without even thinking, we say: *I'll pray for you?* It's an automatic response, even for people with little or no faith. It's a way of extending our concern. From the testimony of Marianne and his closest friends, Red did that too – with one difference. Red didn't say: *I'll pray for you.*

He actually spent time praying for you – by name, before God, in a bond of love and compassion. When we pray for someone else -- in their sickness, fractured relationships, financial distress, humiliation, hunger, personal struggles -- we set aside our own anxieties, fears and frustrations – even our bold attempts to bargain with God for a favor – and, for the sake of the one for whom we pray, we appeal to a provident love that lies far beyond our understanding, yet a mystery we believe is eminently trustworthy.

Many are the family and friends who were the recipients of Red's prayer. As Bob and Sue Miller told me, when Red said: *I'm praying for you*, you knew he meant it and did it. He took your concerns into his heart and, in doing so, he drew you into that love, into his experience of the sacred.



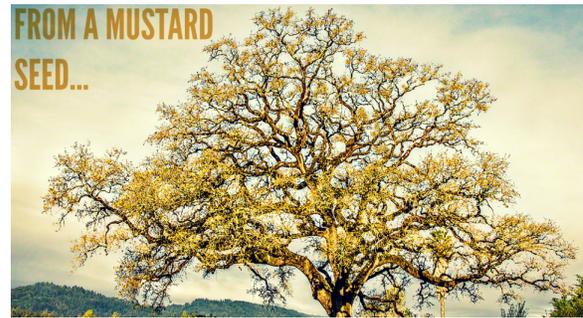
Prayer reaches deeper than any infirmity of our body or weakness of our spirit. It provides a strength that is refreshingly *new* because it draws us into the holiness of the present moment, the “now” in which we find ourselves. Red allowed himself to be drawn into another person's inner secret, into that person's own experience of God which is always ineffable, beyond words or comprehension. With the one for whom Red prayed, he found himself asking the All-Holy One to let them be God's good servant in this “present moment,” this “now,” and to bless God at all times.

Bruce and Mary Jo Brady, also fellow members of the Sunday morning “Breakfast Club,” called Red an example of holiness. He wouldn’t get out of bed until his prayer was finished and the concerns of his world, your world, were laid bare before God our Father, so that God’s will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Red could do this because, as his friends said, he was genuinely interested, keenly observant and a good listener. He would ask you about yourself, remember what you said, try to understand your need and take it with him in prayer to God.

Henry David Thoreau said: “*Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant?*” Red mastered the art of seeing and hearing. Listening is not just etiquette; it’s a way of loving, honoring and respecting. It’s a way of bonding and connecting, of sharing ourselves and our humanity. To listen with compassion, understanding and intention requires that we be present and give the speaker our full attention; that we show interest, be generous, encourage the speaker. Like Red, we listen with our heart as well as our ears, so that it’s safe for the speaker to share his or her thoughts and feelings.

We listen without interrupting or wishing to speak ourselves, and when the speaker is finished, we acknowledge what we’ve heard without judging or correcting. These basic human skills for daily communication and interaction with our fellow travelers on this journey called life are actually divine traits and keys that open us, even here and now, to the Kingdom of God in our midst. How often did Jesus end his parables by saying: *Let those who have ears to hear, listen!* The little parable we heard in Mark’s gospel seemed a most apt description of the presence of God’s Kingdom reflected in Red’s long life. The mustard seed is an herb for seasoning and a weed that is small and seemingly

inconsequential. When once sown as the smallest of seeds, it grows quickly, spreads wildly and is nearly impossible to root out and stop once it takes hold in the ground. It shoots up, pushing out other plants, crowding them, becoming a bush, a shrub, sometimes a small tree where the birds come to build their nests.



The Word of God is the seed, but we too are the seed and the tree. We are to grow and live like the mustard seed sown within our communities, offering shelter, shade, protection and a dwelling place for the “birds.” Those “birds” – the ancient word used in the parable – were any kind of a common blackbird, of which there were thousands, millions everywhere. In the mustard weeds, in Jesus’ community, there is room for the least in the world and room for all sorts of creatures and people. Our hearts must expand like the seeds to be large enough to draw all in and welcome them home, here on earth. After Communion and at the reception following our liturgy, we’ll share with family and friends the many ways that Red’s large branches became a nesting place for others. As Barb and Lorin Scola said -- another couple who gathered with Red and Marianne for over thirty years for breakfast following the 8:00 Mass at St. Perpetua’s – Red was never self-centered.

His branches reached out to embrace others, uniting and bringing people together, looking for the good in everyone, never disparaging others, not criticizing anyone, but speaking highly of everyone and really caring for others and for their wellbeing.



The words of the poet Emily Dickinson could properly be said of Red: “*I felt it shelter to speak to you.*” Doesn’t that echo the words of Jesus about the mustard? *It puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can find shelter in its shade.* I personally appreciated Red’s kindness and support which I felt from him for the past twenty years. In an era when ordained ministry in the church is more challenging than ever, when criticism of clergy and hierarchy is often warranted, Red was always encouraging in a way that made me feel good about priestly ministry -- worthwhile and appreciated. For that I will especially miss him.

Death is only a part of the process of living. If the Communion of Saints has become real for us, then a funeral is a celebration of eternal life. That’s the deeper truth of this Mass of Resurrection. Death is not an occasion only for sorrow, but an occasion to rejoice that Red and all our departed friends and relatives have moved to a deeper level of union and that we will be with them again. We are all always connected to God and each other and every living being. Most of us just don’t realize it. Jesus prays that we could see things in their unity and wholeness. There is only One Love that will lead and carry us across when we die. If we are already at home with Love here, as Red so obviously was, we will quite

readily move into heaven, Love’s eternal home. Death is not a changing of worlds, as most imagine, as much as the walls of this world infinitely expanding. We have been invited—even now, even today, even this moment —

to live in the Communion of Saints,  
in the Life of the eternal  
and eternally Risen Jesus Christ.  
*Let those who have ears to hear, listen!*

*John Kasper, OFS*