

Fr. Aloysius Funeral Mass
December 21, 2010
Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

Recently somebody asked me why we speak about eternal life as eternal rest. I do not think that I answered the question very well. But perhaps the meaning of eternal rest can surface now, as we spend time with the earthly remains of Fr. Aloysius and reach out to reconnect with him in a more substantial and more truthful way than ever before.

Every time we attempt to pray we want to be with God. But how often and how well do we really accomplish that? God is all *energy*, pure *action*, keeping in existence the immensity of the world with its countless plurality of beings. But God as the source of existence is also pure and undisturbed *peace*. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid” (John 14:27). These words of Jesus reveal that the peace he gives is not idleness: it is not rest in the sense of having no goals and no task, no programs and no progress, but rather a final state at which we can finally find our identity, exist without conflicts, and at last become what we were meant to be. *Eternal rest is a last and final relief coming from discovering what we were meant to be, which means that we finally come to terms with what knowing and loving is—i.e. that as we know and love we become one with truth and goodness.* This happens when we stop misleading ourselves, and stop trying to forget and make others forget our mistakes; we find peace in a certain acceptance of the truth of ourselves and the world around us. Eternal rest is ultimately a kind of reconciliation, a union with truth and goodness that we cannot give each other and cannot obtain from human sources.

Eternal peace is the total acceptance of God, and in this acceptance we also come to accept ourselves with a final self-understanding. This self-understanding begins with the belief that we are limited and fallible creatures, and yet that we are created to be infinitely happy and are loved way beyond our understanding. Accepting this love, a love that is undeserved, implies a struggle at the end of which we are reconciled with ourselves and realize that this reconciliation—of my sinful self and the undeserved, infinite love of God—is not of our own making, not our own accomplishment, not our own fabrication but a pure, unlimited and unconditional gift.

The deeply religious soul that animated Fr. Aloysius was constantly at odds with his very insightful, restless self. He always carried a probing attitude toward life, both when looking at himself and when looking at others. This deeply religious but restless vision has finally found peace in his last struggle for survival, his last struggle to find a home—his last effort to be accepted and to accept all the world, both himself and the rest of us.

All of you who are here today know and understand how much of a privilege it was to get even a glimpse of a final, stable word of acceptance from him. How much it has meant when he

settled with you in peace and you were able to share a foretaste of eternal rest and thus ultimate and full affirmation with no guile, no afterthought and no residual doubt or suspicion.

If he were still alive I would not dare telling you one of my last encounters with him, at which he has surprised and literally floored me so much that I did not know how to talk about it but only to a few people. It was not my last visit, but one of the last ones. In the silence that followed a few formal and awkward words on my part, he began to say to me words I have not heard from him before. He said:

“I would not have believed that I would ever tell you this, but, right now I am so happy in your presence. I never wanted to believe that I could love you or even appreciate you. And now, just unexpectedly, I feel happy for you being here and I have a sense of love toward you which I never had thought I could experience.”

I was immensely moved. Now I was the one who failed him, because I did not know what to say. I managed to say, “This is so beautiful,” but I was petrified in the presence of a dying man so that, literally, my heart was hardened, and I was unable to say much else. I was busy trying to think about what I could *do* for him, rather than entrusting myself to some final words of ultimate confidence. At last I gave him my blessing, whispered words of prayer and absolution and left.

Sorry to say it, but at this very unique encounter I had with him I realized that in this life it is simply impossible to fully express ourselves and to fully trust another, let alone love another. When I left his room that day I felt like a fool, and yet also like a happy man who had been told by a dying man that I was able to give him—though I was certainly not the origin of the gift—something that he recognized as a message from God, a glance into eternity. In other words, I was happy because I saw that I gave him more than I was able to give.

Eternal peace grant unto him, O Lord; make him find reconciliation; make him truly match what he was created for; make him feel what is essential in finding grace; make him happy for having been created, kept in existence for an earthly life of almost 85 years; make him feel like a winner; make him experience the abundance of his own self under the wings of a caring, loving, self-emptying divine Giver, and may he find in you his eternal home.