
The Light of Christ: A Tribute to Bob Clayton

**A homily at the funeral of Robert Farrington Clayton
by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell**

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

It's Easter here at the Cathedral. Easter is the season of new life and celebration, of flowers and joy. But we get to Easter after Good Friday. Easter is really the realization that the life and death and resurrection and ultimately ascension of Jesus Christ is the pattern of life for all of us. It's not a magic trick that shows us that God is all powerful. It is instead the promise of new life that lies ahead of us.

We celebrate Easter, and it's coming here at the Cathedral with a vigil. It starts early on Easter Sunday in the horseshoe drive around the biggest fire that has ever been built. Typically, one log bigger than the fire from last year.

In the darkness of the morning, we light this candle from that fire. And from this candle, we light individual lights that we all carry as we walk up the hill. The dean, who is carrying this candle, sings, "The light of Christ, The light of Christ." And we all respond, "Thanks be to God."

And then we come into a dark Cathedral. As the service moves from one thing to another, from one moment of revelation to the next, the lights slowly come on. When we're at the font, they come on at the font. When we're at the lectern, they come on at the lectern. We move from darkness to light as the light of Christ spreads out among all of us.

I tell you this story because this Easter, as I was walking up that drive carrying my candle, all I could think about was Bob: Robert Farrington Clayton. Because in so many ways, he was the light of Christ. Light is not something you can see, light is something that lets you see everything else. Light is something that brings all of life up and makes it available to you. And Bob did that for so many of us.

It starts just with his greeting of you. Just remember a moment when Bob looked at you and you knew that he loved you, and that he was invested in you. You knew somehow that his attention meant you were lovable and worthy of investment. Bob had that power. Wherever Bob went, that light seemed to bring more of life to everything that was around him.

I remember Bob in our Sunday School class years ago when we were studying forgiveness telling us this serious, heartwarming, humble story of the year that it took him to forgive the driver that killed his son on Easter. But he not only did the work to get there, he then witnessed to that presence of God to the rest of us. The light of Christ.

And I love hearing these stories about Bob at work. You know how work is. The people above you don't always know a lot about you, but you know a lot about them because you've seen how they act when it was on the line. Do they have integrity or not? Do they care about you or not?

When we have the reception following the service, I invite you to search out and listen to the stories of people who worked for Bob, people who knew Bob, and yet were still willing to buy a boat with him. People who knew Bob and still were willing to introduce their grandmother and mother to him. People that he had managed who were willing to be his daughter-in-law. The light of Christ.

The last time I saw Bob alive, he was here at church. It wasn't really very long ago. He and Peggy were

stopped in the Atrium, the space you walked through to get here. Bob was moving from the service to the car about 15 yards at a time, stopping to rest. You could see from a distance that he was struggling to move. But as I got closer, I saw in his face the same light I had always seen. Despite his Parkinson's, despite his fatigue, despite everything else, he was glad to see me and it was real. I felt more special, more alive because of him. The light of Christ.

We are here in this season of Easter to remember the light of Christ, to remember that the resurrection is not one event that affected one person, but in fact, the promise of new life for us all.

We are all called to be lights of Christ in our own way, and our challenge throughout life is to shine more brightly to others through the love and empathy and compassion and care that enables new life. Bob is a good model for that. Bob was the light of Christ.

And now, Bob is all light.

Amen.