

**You raise me up—so I can stand on mountains,
You raise me up—to walk on stormy seas,
I am strong—when I am on your shoulders,
You raise me up—to more than I can be.**

The words to “You Raise Me Up” can be interpreted in many different ways. Many feel the song is about God and what He can do. I agree. Fr. Ron’s love for this song is also an excellent analogy of himself and what he did for others in many special and secret ways.

This very special holy man of God taught each and every one of us how to live by his example of kindness and love. He was and always will be our Shepherd, Pastor, our Priest, and our Friend. I have never known a Priest like him that lived life having so much fun. He lived life more fully than do most of us.

Fr. Ron’s love for children was never more evident than at “First Communion” and “Confirmation.” His gentle way never put any of the kids on the spot as they truly looked up to him as a role model. He gave the children something positive and special to remember about him in their learning of the Catholic Faith. There are probably some of you here tonight that experienced your “First Communion” with Fr. Ron, and know well of what I speak. (Holding hands on the Altar reciting the Lord’s Prayer)

Another great gift that Fr. Ron brought to Christmas and Easter Masses was a specially written homily with music on a CD. Just a few short years ago he did a duet with Bing Crosby as they sang “Do You Hear What I Hear”? Ah yes, it was a moment to behold as the Our Lady of Grace parishioners gave him a standing ovation!!!

In October of 1997, I was hired by Fr. Ron as he laid out a plan for me as the new music director of Our Lady of Grace. At that meeting, we both discovered our love for Detroit Red Wing Hockey. We also discovered that both of us played as “Goalies” in our younger days. He said: “How do you think I got like this? I got hit in the head with the puck one too many times!” A year later, we attended our first Red Wing game together with my precious wife to be, Mary. In 2002, we went to the 2nd game of the Stanley Cup Finals and Fr. Ron wore his original “Alex Delvecchio” #10 Red Wing Jersey & Cap. It was the most exciting, greatest, and gratifying time any of us ever had. Yes, the Wings then won 4 straight games in winning the Stanley Cup. There were more times like this that will always be a “Treasure” to remember with Fr. Ron.

Fr. Ron also lived by the scripture: “Those who are First shall be last, and those who are Last, shall be First.” At the Our Lady of Grace Christmas Party Dinner, he made absolutely certain that everyone was fed before him. He would

thank each and every person for coming, shake their hand, hug the ladies, and wish everyone a most Blessed and Merry Christmas.

One of the best gifts on Sunday's was for me to go to the Rectory after the 8:30 am Mass. There would be Fr. Charlie having breakfast as I would get my weekly cup of coffee and a chocolate donut. Soon afterwards, Fr. Ron would greet us and say to Fr. Charlie: how are this morning "Your Holiness?" Fr. Charlie would promptly rise and bless us as if he were the Pope! The team of Fr. Ron and Fr. Charlie, at least in the Rectory, was like watching Laurel & Hardy -- Fr. Ron would say: "Here's another fine mess you've gotten us into!" The "entertainment" was often too much to bear as I laughed to see these two Priests sharing such a great sense of humor and loving life.

One of my most treasured memories with Fr. Ron during these last 10 years was when we were able to bring "Closure and Finality" to the several hundred funeral Masses we did together. When grieving families would display "gratefulness of appreciation" walking out the Our Lady of Grace doors, our mission was accomplished Fr. Ron had a special way of bringing relief to people's hearts when they were hurting like we are today. Fr. Ron would often say to me, "as far as I'm concerned, we do funerals as good as anyone within the Archdiocese of Detroit." One of his most inventive and ingenious gifts were special poems that he added meaning to in his own way. One of Fr. Ron's favorite poems was "A Bridge Called Love."

A Bridge Called Love

It takes us back to brighter years,
to happier sunlit days,
and to precious moments
that will be with us always.

And these fond recollections
are treasured in the heart
to bring us always close to those
from whom we had to part.

There is a bridge of memories
from earth to Heaven above...
It keeps our dear ones near us
It's the bridge that we call love.

Fr. Ron would now call these "Precious Moments" and the "Bridge of Memories" a true "gift" that a person truly is. He would say: "When this "Gift" becomes a "Memory", the Memory now becomes a "Treasure" within our Hearts." He would repeat this line again very slowly. And so now, very deep within our own hearts, Fr. Ron has become that true "Treasure" for us all.

There is no doubt that I love him very much, as we all do. And I believe that when Fr. Ron met God face to face, God said: "Well done, my true, loyal, and faithful servant." So let us be grateful that Fr. Ron came into all our lives. He changed my life for the better. Now we all have a very special Pastor, Priest, and Friend that we can pray to that I believe will help us to God's Holy Kingdom. So, "Now We Remain" and Fr. Ron, we thank you because:

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We are strong—when we are on your shoulders,
You raise us up—to more than we can be.**

August 4th, 2007

By Music Director Lawrence Zelanka