

**“The souls of the Just are in the hand of God” and ... ‘the best is yet to come!’**

Today, here at sea and all around the planet, the Catholic Church pauses to honor her deceased loved ones, especially the Poor Souls in Purgatory, and to remind us of what this life is all about...because ...we are, all, so very mortal. In the Liturgies, this entire month of November, our thoughts will be directed to the fact of our mortality and accountability. Some say it is depressing; I say it is ‘realistic!’

I begin, addressing the issue of mortality, by sharing with you this story.

**Once upon a time**, there was an elderly woman, who had been given three (3) months to live due to a terminal illness. So, as she was getting her things ‘in order,’ only days before she died, she contacted one of her parish priests to come to her house to discuss her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted to be sung, which readings she wanted read, and even what dress she wished to be ‘laid out’ in. She also requested to be buried with her personal bible. Now, everything was in order. Everything had been discussed. The priest was about to leave, when she suddenly remembered something else...very important to her.

**“Oh --there’s one more thing,” she said excitedly.**

**“What’s that?” came the priest’s quiet reply.**

**“I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.”**

**The priest stood looking at her, not knowing what to say.**

**“That surprises you, doesn’t it,” the woman said.**

**“Well, to be honest, I am a bit puzzled by the request.”**

**“In all my years of attending church dinners,” the woman explained, “I always remember that when the dishes from the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, ‘Keep your fork.’ It was my favorite part of the meal because I knew something even better was coming ...like velvety, chocolate cake or deep-dish, apple pie...something wonderful and with substance! So-o, I just want people to see me in the casket with a fork in my right hand. And I want them to wonder, ‘What’s with the fork.’ Then I want you to tell them,**

**‘Keep your fork...the best is yet to come.’ ”**

The priest’s eyes welled up with tears... of joy, as he hugged the woman good-bye. He knew this would be the last time he would see her before she died. And he knew that this woman had a better grasp on what life and heaven were about than he did. She **KNEW** that something better was coming.

At the funeral, people were paying their ‘last respects’ at the woman’s casket and they saw the beautiful dress the woman was wearing, her favorite Bible in her hand, and ...that fork in her right hand! Then came the expected question, “What’s with the fork?”

At her funeral Mass, the Mass of Christian Burial, the priest told the people of the conversation he had had with the woman. He told them about the fork and what it symbolized for her. The priest told them how he could not stop thinking about the fork and that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right.

So-o, the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you, ever so gently, that...

**“The best is yet to come!”**

May our loving God, our Abba, bless you...the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.