

Homily at the Funeral of Ed Bottei, MD, FCCP, FACMT

After graduating with an undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame, Dr. Bottei completed medical school, an internal medicine residency and a pulmonary and critical care fellowship at the University of Chicago. He then completed a clinical toxicology and hyperbaric medicine fellowship at the University of Cincinnati. In 2000, he took a position as a pulmonary and critical care physician at the West Virginia University-Charleston and as the medical director of the West Virginia Poison Center. Since 2002, he has been the medical director of the Iowa Poison Control Center, the state medical toxicologist for the Iowa Department of Public Health and an adjunct clinical assistant professor in pulmonary and critical care medicine, emergency medicine, pediatrics, public health and pharmacy at the University of Iowa.

Dr. Ed Bottei took his own life on 2022-04-27; he was 55.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

I once tried to convince Ed that he had the best job in the world. We were having Liturgy one Sunday morning and, as happened every so often, his pager went off and he went to answer it. After liturgy, he came to me and he said, “Oh, Father, I’m sorry about that, I’m sorry my pager...” I said, “Do not ever apologize for answering that pager. Don’t ever apologize for answering that pager because I know what’s on the other end of that pager so, when that pager goes off, you go answer it.” I said, “You have the best job in the world because every time that pager goes off, you have the opportunity to save a life.”

I was talking with a couple of his co-workers yesterday and I was thinking, “Can we even estimate how many people he saved just by answering that pager? How many people’s lives? How many people are alive today because he answered that page?” And, yet, through 20 years of doing that here — and he did it elsewhere, in West Virginia — through 20 years of doing that here in Sioux City, he did all of that good, all of that good, while suffering from what eventually became a terminal illness.

Now, some of you may be immediately thinking, “Well, what do you mean? He didn’t have cancer.” He did have cancer. He did have cancer. He didn’t have a cancer of the body but he suffered from a cancer of the mind, a disease just as insidious and perfidious as any cancer of the body can be.

Cancer has at its core, one of the things that makes it cancer is deception. Cancer deceives the body by saying to the body, “No, look, I’m fine, don’t attack me,” and the immune system ignores it”. The newest therapies — we’ve tried burning it, we’ve tried poisoning it — the newest therapies are now trying to get the body to understand, “Do not believe the deception of the cancer. It is bad, go attack it,” and we’re trying to get the immune system to attack the cancer.

Depression is a cancer of the mind and it has deception at its very core. Depression is, at its very core, a disease of deceit. Those of us us, including myself, — and I know several here — those of us who suffer, like Ed, with it daily are very familiar with its lies: that we’re worthless; that we’re no good; that nobody really cares about us that if somebody really does look like they’re caring about us, they’re the ones with the problem because there’s nothing really in us that should be cared about.

Those are the lies of depression that we hear each and every day and we have to fight those off. It is my firm belief that we are here today because, unfortunately, Ed, for a little while, after fighting it since he was 13, Ed unfortunately believed the biggest lie of all that depression can tell us: that the world is a better place without us and that our loved ones are better off without us in their lives.

The presence of each and every one of you here today — some of you having come hundreds of miles — is a witness to the magnitude of that lie. The fact that each and every one of you is here

today is a witness to the fact that we are not better off with Ed gone, that we are not better off with Ed not in our lives. But all it takes, all it takes, is a few minutes of believing that lie,

Let no one say Ed was weak. We wouldn't say someone with cancer was weak if they fought it for 40 years and then finally succumbed to their illness, would we? Ed wasn't weak. He fought and he fought and he fought and he fought.

Let no one say Ed was selfish. Everything about the way he died points to the fact that he genuinely believed – incorrectly – he genuinely believed that he was doing the right thing not for himself, but for De, for Sadie, for everyone in his life. The fact that so many of you are here today shows the magnitude of that mistake.

The deception is ongoing. The deception never stops; it must be constantly battled. Depression is on the rise and it makes sense that it is.

Why? We live in a culture that values deception. We live in a culture that bombards all of us with deception each and every day. Some of it's easy to spot: "Buy this cologne and all the women will love you!" "Ladies, you can't wear that same outfit twice!" On and on and on and it never stops unless we turn off the radio, turn off the TV, turn off the computer. Every time we turn on one of those things, we are bombarded with deception.

Who are those who are most valued in our society? Who are those who are at the top of the social pyramid? The two kinds of people who lie to us the most, who make a living by lying to us: actors and politicians. Now, our politicians – it doesn't matter what party they are; in fact, the parties themselves are pretty much lies, aren't they? – now, our politicians tell us that they will set up an agency where they will be the arbiters of what is truth and what is misinformation. Brothers and sisters, I warn you that, in every society where such an agency has been set up before, one of the first sources of so-called "misinformation" they go after is the Church.

How do we fight it? How do we fight the deception of depression? How do we fight the deception of our society that bombards us day after day after day and never stops?

If, from here today, we take one thing, I hope that we will all realize there is one simple truth with which we can battle that deception. Be sure, it's not an easy truth and the deception will try everything it can to drive it from our minds, but it is a simple truth.

There is one simple truth that, if we embrace it and we understand it and, most importantly, live it will allow us to see through all the deceptions. There is one simple truth that, if we embrace it and we understand it and we live it, will make us seem like a beacon of light in the darkness. There is one simple truth that, if we embrace it and we understand it and we live it, will make all the deceptions and everything in this world irrelevant.

One simple truth.

What is this one simple truth?

The simple truth is this:

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

Indeed, He is risen!

Glory to His third day resurrection!

For Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and, upon those in the tombs, bestowing life!

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

Fr. Peter Cox, 2022-05-03.