

## Pilgrimage Continues into the Afterlife for Robert Whealan

“Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, for their works follow them.” ([Rev. xiv:13](#))

As the Easter *Alleluia* rings out, with the joy and hope of the Resurrection, we commend the soul of Bob to the Lord, recalling to mind his ever-manly (if therefore also occasionally ‘gruff’) example of *bona fide* Christian charity.

For Bob believed deeply that a faithful Christian soul must strive, against his own impulses, to give up everything of earthly life, and even that life itself, for the eternal greater glory of God. And it is never easy to do that, rarely pleasant, and hardly ever ‘nice’.

With rock-solid faith to guide him, Bob lived a long life of charity. He did so much for others in his time – not least on his many pilgrimages to Auriesville – that it is difficult to recount his good deeds with justice ... or an accuracy of estimation which could satisfy Bob, ever the engineer-mathematician. But surely ‘the sum of it’ (if we might tease Bob’s sense of arithmetic and humorous *punishment*), equaled a faithful response to the call to love others as Christ first loves us, sinners all. This was evidenced in his practice as a frequent penitent and daily communicant, which he continued right up until Holy Thursday, only days before his death on Bright Saturday, April 2.

“It was easy for some, mostly newcomers on pilgrimage, to misunderstand Bob as a stern man, when he was really a serious ‘man with a mission’”, said a fellow old-timer-organizer on learning of Bob’s passing. “Anyone who knew him, knew he was always concentrated, fixed, on his mission. The exacting work-ethic he demanded of himself sometimes made it difficult for the less-attentive, or patient, among us to understand him. But for his fellow-organizers, it was sheer pleasure to work with: I’ll go so far as to say that Bob was a perfect co-worker, because – well -- his work really was perfect.”

Bob had the knack for knowing exactly how to make the pilgrimage get to where it was going even when the going got tough – an old habit he continued after working for decades as an industrial-operations engineer. Grace, his widow, has said that, “preparing for and making pilgrimage [to Auriesville] was always a high point of his year.” Indeed, it is thanks to Bob’s

steady dedication and generous devotion that the pilgrimage stands on a solid foundation and continues even after 20 years.

Perhaps what pilgrims will best remember about Bob is reflected in what another veteran pilgrim wrote when learning of his death: “Hope now he’s telling the saints in heaven to ‘shut the door, move over, and make room for the next person’.” It’s a phrase most pilgrims certainly will associate with Bob. It was a clear sign of his concern for the safety and well-being of fellow pilgrims as he shadowed, in his van, the column of pilgrims growing weary by the hour in the searing sun along The Way. It was, so many of us probably thought when tired, a bit annoying, but ultimately instructive in an unmistakable way: *“Doesn’t this guy just driving along realize just how tired I am from walking all day? And now he’s telling me to think of the other guy? ... On second thought, yeah, I guess that is what charity and this spiritual exercise is about, after all.”*

Thanks for the lessons, dear Bob!

In all, Bob spent 14 years since 1999, his first pilgrimage, thinking about the other guy. Even when he had grown too frail in old age to make it to New York, he spent months planning to help others learn that simple Gospel message: practicing – quietly, hiddenly – throughout each year what he preached once a year in the vans all three days along the way to Auriesville. His friends and fellow-pilgrims will be ever grateful for the talents he shared, his gifts. His own good-gruff self.

And we miss him already, sorely. In tears.

May our sadness turn to joy! May Bob shine now among the stars! May his memory be eternal! *Eternal rest, grant your faithful laborer, Robert, O Lord! And let perpetual Light shine upon him! May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in Peace. Amen.*

Pilgrims are asked to continue to pray, in their charity, for the repose of Robert B. Whealan of Cedar Grove, NJ, who passed away Saturday, April 2, 2016, at age 86.

See obituary [here](#) and [here](#). See eulogy of his pilgrim-friends, [here](#).