

**Homily for the Mass of Christian Burial for former  
Illinois State Senator William R. "Bill" Haine**

**August 21, 2021**

**St. Mary's Parish  
Alton, Illinois**

**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, Consecrated Religious, members of the Haine Family, and my dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

As we gather for this Mass of Christian Burial for former Illinois State Senator William R. "Bill" Haine, I wish first of all to extend my sincere condolences to Bill's wife, Anna, their seven children and their spouses, 38 grandchildren (with one more on the way), and one great-grandchild.

It was just two weeks ago today that we gathered right here at St. Mary Church to celebrate Bill and Anna's 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. It was a great grace that God gave Bill the extra days needed to have this beautiful celebration of the half century that he and Anna shared in the Sacrament of Matrimony, surrounded by their whole family and friends. Sitting in a wheelchair, he was obviously weakened by his battle with cancer and

drained by the chemotherapy he had been receiving. But he still very much had his wits about him.

After my homily, Bill and Anna renewed their marital commitment and gave thanks to God for standing lovingly by their side in good times and in bad, praying to remain faithful in their love for each other as true witnesses to the covenant God made with humankind. I prayed that, following the example of the Holy Family, Bill and Anna would give praise to God without end in the joy of His kingdom. Then I leaned over to congratulate Bill and he whispered to me, "You didn't say anything about my first electoral defeat." That was typical Bill: you never knew exactly what he was going to say at any given moment! Since his comment was unexpected, I wasn't sure exactly what his point was. Given that this was in the context of his Golden Wedding Anniversary, I thought maybe Bill was implying that somehow Anna was responsible for his first electoral defeat!

I found out afterwards that Bill's first electoral defeat came around 1968 when he ran for alderman while he was in Vietnam serving in the U.S. Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Division. He was sitting in a tent when he decided to run for an aldermanic seat in Alton. He described this in his own words in an interview with *The Telegraph* in 2017: "I got a letter from a good friend

who was active in city politics who wanted me to run for alderman. I'm literally in a hooch in Vietnam. . . . I thought 'Why not?' I was on R&R in Hong Kong, and I went to the consulate and had this official notarize them (his nominating petitions), mailed them in and got on the ballot." That turned out to be Bill's first electoral defeat!

Going back to the anniversary Mass two weeks ago, after we prayed the Our Father, I gave Bill and Anna a special anniversary blessing. Then I offered Anna the sign of peace and extended my hand to shake Bill's and he again whispered to me, "You didn't mention my first electoral victory." This time I was ready, and I replied, "Would you like to say a few words after Communion?" He quickly shook that off, saying, "No, no, no!"

For the record, William Haine's first electoral victory was when he was elected to the Madison County Board in 1978, taking the more traditional route of actually being in the county to campaign rather than off in a foreign land fighting a war!

Anna recalls that when Bill was elected to the Madison County Board their family was still young and growing. Because they had only one car, Anna and the children rode the bus frequently. The threat of the Bi-State Development Agency to cut local bus service caused Bill to champion the

role of local public transportation. As a result, he was appointed chairman of the newly formed Madison County Transit District. I know what that is like: when you complain about something, someone in charge eventually says, "Fine, you fix it!" This began Bill's long and distinguished career of public service.

After serving on the Madison County Board for ten years (1978 - 1988), Bill was then elected to multiple terms as State's Attorney from 1988 to 2002, and then as State Senator from 2002 to 2018. He was serving on the Illinois Board of Elections at the time of his death.

Bill was in the midst of his tenure as a State Senator when I was appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. It was not long after that when I met him at various functions, such as the Red Mass – so named for the red vestments that the celebrant would wear in honor of the Holy Spirit – that I would celebrate from time to time for lawyers and legislators at our Cathedral in Springfield and at St. Boniface Church in Edwardsville. Bill and Anna would attend the Respect Life Mass that I celebrate every year at Holy Family Parish in Granite City. Bill also served on the Board of the Catholic Conference of Illinois.

Bill's Catholic faith very much shaped who he was both in public and in private. Bill attended St. Patrick's Grade School and Marquette High School in Alton, and earned his bachelor's degree from St. Louis University. After enlisting and serving in Vietnam as a member of the First Cavalry Division (Air Mobile), earning the Bronze Star for Meritorious Service in Combat Operations, Bill returned home and earned his Juris Doctorate from St. Louis University, where he met Anna.

Bill and I had much in common and we became good friends. In addition to our Catholic education, I also have a law degree and we had many common interests which made for engaging conversations, sometimes accompanied by a cigar and our favorite beverage. As a teenager, I served as President of my high school's Young Democrats Club. As a pro-life Democrat, Senator Haine was one of the last of a dying breed. We shared our dismay that the Democratic Party was pushing out its pro-life wing.

Bill Haine lived his commitment to human life from conception to natural death not only in his politics but most especially with his family. In keeping with the saying, "You will know them by their fruits," the kind of father and person that Bill Haine was could be seen in the dynamic and spiritually fruitful group of children and grandchildren that he and Anna

led. It takes great joy and hope to have seven children. It takes greater joy and hope to inspire the same kind of positive worldview in your children so that they have 38 grandchildren, and counting!

While remaining true to his convictions, Bill was a master at finding common ground with all kinds of people to advance the common good. He did not allow disagreements on philosophy or moral questions to get in the way of friendship or areas of agreement that could advance the common good.

His family asked me to share a few stories about the personal care he took for individuals. One story comes from his son Tom, which I will relate in his own words:

I was walking into a frame shop in Edwardsville. A young man, the owner, assisted me with an anniversary present for my wife, expediting it (because I was late as usual). He recognized my name and my office, and said he knew and respected my dad a lot (which is very common thing to hear), but with no specifics. When I came back to pick up the framed gift, the previous owner (an older lady), who still worked in the shop, pulled me aside, and said: "You know, your dad changed that man's life. You should ask him." I did. He said, with no great fanfare, that growing up my dad was his hero because he had saved him

when no one else could. He said his mother had told him over and over when he was growing up what my dad had done for him. The basic outline was this: His mother was a young immigrant from Iraq when this man was a baby, while his estranged dad was back in Iraq. The father was seeking to forcibly remove the baby son back to that country. They reached out to dad, who was state's attorney, as a last resort, though they were penniless and powerless. Dad worked through legal channels to prevent the forcible removal. After this young man told me the story, I was astounded. This was a great achievement of humanity and the application of government power to assist the powerless and change an individual man's life. But he never bragged about it. This is just one example. People stop me and my family members every day with stories about how he assisted numerous individuals, those who have power but so often those who have no power, and never mentioned it again. He left a trail of changed lives that he never bragged about or leveraged for political gain – just because it was the right thing to do.

Tom also describes how his parents were an example of “putting your money where your mouth is.” Bill and Ann began practicing natural family planning as a young couple, which was a conversion for them and was a very important change in their family and faith life. Bill felt that they should

tell others about NFP, out of a sense of regret that they did not know about it when they were first married. Bill led the charge to get both himself and Anna trained as NFP teachers. For 15 years, Bill Haine, as a very public individual – the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of the County as State’s Attorney – taught Natural Family Planning with his wife to dozens and dozens of young couples. As Tom says, this was not your typical political move! Neither was having seven children and being known as an orthodox pro-life, pro-family Catholic politician from the 80’s until today.

He always said you should “play the hand you’re dealt” when people would say they were sorry about his illness. He was tough and stoic to the end, and was not the kind of man to discuss his inner life very often. But while stoic, the end of his life was filled with humble acceptance of the faith, a true Catholic death. He received the Eucharist at home many times when he was unable to get to church, and in the last week he wept tears when he received, saying: “Well that's never happened before!”

Bill kept his sense of humor until the end. Death is not easy. On the visit to the doctor when he was hoping the treatment was doing better, on the week before his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he got the opposite news: the cancer was back with a vengeance, and he had only days to weeks to live. At the

end of the visit, the Doctor said, "I hope the celebration this weekend is wonderful." Bill said: "I notice you aren't wishing me a Merry Christmas."

He also was blessed to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick about three times in the last two weeks. The parish priests, who he respected immensely, cared for him very dearly. On one of the last visits, Father Jeremy anointed him, and trying to lighten the mood afterwards, pointed out Bill's bald head, saying, "Bill, you look like a swimmer!" Bill responded: "A swimmer who drowned?" Then, in his last few days, while chatting with Anna, he said: "I wonder if Jesus will have a sense of humor."

Bill had a broad scope of concern, his mind ranging around the globe, reading multiple newspapers every day. Every day, in morning prayer, he had a long list of intentions, to include persecuted Christians in Nigeria, persecuted Christians in the Middle East, and the latest geopolitical concerns relating to religious liberty.

Daughter Mary tells the following story, again in her own words:

Twice Dad asked me to do something for him – go to an event when he couldn't, or could but needed help. Once I went to the funeral of a prominent politician whose name I unfortunately don't remember (though he would). Dad was out of town and couldn't get back. He sent me to go to the viewing and give his

condolences. The other was the opening dinner of a big local endeavor and he was on crutches or maybe a wheelchair from his accident and needed help. I think on that as just an amazing gift of confidence he must have actually had, or pretended he had, in me. I sat at the table with all these adults, and shook hands and tried to make intelligent comments. I was a high schooler or maybe college freshman. I probably had awkward hair and questionable style. Didn't know what the heck I was doing and shouldn't have even been there, but he thought I could so I thought I could too.

Daughter Elizabeth says:

Though it was a boon to the ego to have one's Dad so often in the news, our self-worth was really built upon a more important basis: The stories we heard, sometimes from him, but often from others, of his defense of those who had no one else to defend them, and for whom he would go against human respect and conventional opinion in a courageous pursuit of what he determined to be right and just. When they didn't know who else to call, people who had suffered some injustice would call him, and usually, he could do something to help them.

Daughter Cecilia adds her words:

There are three qualities that seem to run as a golden thread through dad's whole life that all of these speak to: humility, generosity, and stealth! He was constantly surprising me and it was no different for those around him. He never fit the expected mold. The man who we never saw fix anything crawled under the van and wired up a fallen muffler. So many surprisingly generous gifts, big and small, whatever he thought would generate the most happiness in the recipient, and always with no strings attached, sometimes not even taking any credit. (St. Nicholas style). The well-known politician meeting everyone as a human being filled with dignity, no matter what side of anything they were on, even if it was the wrong side of the law. The man always ready to celebrate a joyful occasion and be steady in a difficult one. The man who had to summon every ounce of strength in his last week just to get through being helped to shower and get dressed, without any fear or trepidation, just patient and realistic acceptance of the situation.

Bill's children relate how much he loved their Mom's cooking and how he always stood in admiration of her and her skills no matter how simple the meal and how much he valued her homemaking.

It is only fitting, therefore, that Anna gets the last word. In a speech she gave for the Head Start Circle of Care Award Dinner on June 17, 2005, Anna Haine said the following:

My children and I are so blessed by Bill's constant loving care. When we were starting our family, he made it a priority to keep his political work close to home so he could be with his family. He was there to help at home when the children were born and when they were very small. He was there to give puppet shows in the first grade or in kindergarten when they started school. As a young precinct committeeman he was there to teach his children the importance of voting when, for lack of a better space, he had the polling place set up in our living room. . . .

I am confident that Bill's experience, vision, integrity and political skill will continue to be a boon to his family, the people in his district and to the people of the State of Illinois. I am grateful that God has given us the will, the strength, and the means for Bill to exercise his political leadership in representing this area in the State Senate. As he has done all his life, because he cares, he works to help the whole community by using the government to serve the people.

If Bill could speak to us now, I imagine that he would object to all this high praise of him, reminding us that this is not a canonization, but a funeral, saying to me with that little grin on his face, “Remember, you’re just a bishop, and only the Pope can canonize a saint!” As such, we pray for God to have mercy on his soul, to accept whatever suffering he endured here on earth—especially in his last illness—as satisfaction for any time due in purgatory, and receive him promptly into the joys of the heavenly banquet, a foretaste of which we will now share in this Eucharist.

May God give us this grace. Amen.