

Always -- Buddy

Christ the Redeemer Church
December 27, 2009
First Sunday after Christmas

Luke 2:41-52
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

This bulletin cover reads “Look to the Lord and Seek his face always.” Always. Life is brief and precious. This bulletin cover was selected over a month ago.

Jackie always shows up to play the piano. I always enjoy working with “always” people.

Grandpa always got up at 4:30 am on the farm, always did his job on the farm, and always was fun for me to be around. And he always prayed before each meal.

Always. 5 years ago when we brought our dog home from the animal shelter and named him Buddy we told him we would always take care of him. We always did.

Joseph and Mary went to the feast as they *always* did.

I always change my sermon title at the last minute. Today I did not change it. I selected the scripture and title two weeks ago when we did bulletins ahead of time for the holiday. I am sticking to this Always title. It has helped to stick with it.

Many of you have had very hard and different years. Advent turned out to be a very different Advent for us this year. We came home laughing hard from our wonderful Christmas pageant and found our beloved dog Buddy dying. He had been fine when we left just three hours earlier.

After a valiant effort for 8 days in the Intensive Care Unit at the vet’s office he let us know this past Monday December 21 that it was time for him to go. Liver cancer that suddenly appeared had run its course.

He never knew he was a dog. He always wanted a dog of his own. We would talk about having a dog and he would get excited at getting his own puppy to play with in life. He never knew he was a dog. Pam and Daniel took him from pound status to human status to being in heaven at 101 Sierra Ridge Drive. His new family saved his life and promised to always be with him. And we were there for him as his loving family -- from the pound to chasing squirrels in the next world.

He preached three times at Christ the Redeemer Church. I read his manuscript while he pranced around this congregation. Many of you still say he was the best preacher in our family. He was Everybody’s Dog as one of you said.

As Betty the Dog Priest who is the dog expert and groomer in town said, “Buddy had one hell of a good life.” I have never heard Betty use such colorful language.

I call her the Dog Priest because we called her before we even called the vet on that Sunday night. She told me how to get a hold of the vet for this emergency. She was at the vet's office waiting for us when we arrived at the hospital. Dog Priest.

Dog Priest. I never had one before. I like having a Dog Priest who is there for you.

I was glad I had already scheduled Pam's father Dan to preach Christmas Eve.

All things *always* work together for good for them that love God's ways.

Joseph and Mary went to the feast as they *always* did. Not glamorous but it is helpful to just go to church and to feasts. Feasts and celebrations get you through such losses in life.

Dog priests.

Christmas morning in a private moment my favorite daughter hands her mother a card with these words written, *"This is to help you rescue a dog when you are ready. Do not use until then! You make the best home for anyone who needs it. Love, Buddy and (Amity, Cosmo the dog and Charlie the dog).*

She always knows what to do. Always. She learned these ways in the church. Not in the corporate or secular world but in the Church. Such thinking comes only from the ways of the Church. From God. Always.

I debated over whether or not to forward emails to Daniel our favorite son over in Germany about Buddy. Life always has its difficult decisions. As Erika in Dubai wrote recently "raising teenagers is the hardest job in the world." You never know what to do and you are always hoping you are doing right. I decided to forward him all of your caring emails of concern.

He wrote this morning from Germany, *"Dad and Mom, Last night I had a very vivid dream about Buddy. We were on the driveway in San Marcos. Buddy was greeting me, licking me on the face, doing his typical "Human sitting pose," and running around as his usual jumpy happy-to-see-you energy. I was petting him and could almost feel his fur. In the dream I asked you "Why is Buddy still alive? I thought we put him to sleep..." to which you replied after a short pause "We DID, but he still lives in your heart.*

I can't remember the last time I had that vivid of a dream about anything. Thank you for all that you did for Buddy, and thank you for sending me all the emails from caring people in our church.

Buddy, you know the dog that didn't know he was a dog, was a great dog.

Thanks and Love, Daniel"

That kind of coping and thinking only comes from Church and from God.

Thank you for all you have done for us and thank you for being such caring people in this

church and in the Church around the world. Your love has helped, as Always. What is in our hearts lives Forever. Amen.