In Memoriam

+Cletus E. Heidbreder+



**Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.**

“Who do you love?” That was Clete’s question to everyone. “Who do you love?” Dearly beloved in Christ, especially you, Ethel, Keith & Joy, Kimberly & Keith, family and his dear friends: without a shadow of a doubt I can say that I know Clete loved you, each of you, deeply and individually as the beautiful people that God made you. Clete was a man filled with love and that showed in his life. He was someone for whom God’s Word described *in truth*, for when the Scripture says that we love because Christ first loved us (1 John 4:19), it spoke of Christ’s saints, that is, it spoke of Clete. For Clete Heidbreder was a man for whom Christ died, Clete was a man who belonged to His savior completely and without reservation. “Who do you love?” Clete would say. “Love your Church, Love your country, Love everyone, and never throw a day away.”

Clete lived by this moto and he passed it on to his family, his children and grandchildren, he passed it on to his brothers and sisters in the congregation. “Who do you love?” To love your Church is say “love Jesus”. You know, in our time many people wouldn’t even have the Church on their list, let alone Jesus. But for Clete. He never questioned where He belonged on a Sunday morning. He *knew* He belonged in the Lord’s house, he *knew* he belonged gathered together with the rest of his brothers and sisters in Christ, he *knew* that more than anything else he needed to hear the voice of His Good Shepherd. Clete was blessed by faithful parents who raised him in the Church to know this truth about his savior. Baptized on March 14th, 1920 and confirmed on May 6, 1934, Clete would live his whole life in the baptismal grace he received that March day and in the glad confession of the faith that he made almost 81 years ago to the day. “Who do you love?” No doubt that Clete loved his Church, that is to say, he loved Jesus with his heart, mind, and soul.

As much as Clete asked that question of everyone, I imagine that as he was escorted by the angels to the throne of his savior this past Friday morning that he even might have asked Jesus, with a twinkle in his eye and wonder in his voice: “Lord, who do you love?” And when Jesus saw his servant Clete, Jesus said to him: “That’s easy Clete. I love you. You’re my beloved child for I laid down my life on the cross of Calvary that you would be mine forever. (LSB 689) I never left you or forsook you all these years. I led you in paths of righteousness for my name’s sake. (Ps 23) I blessed you, comforted and guided you throughout your earthly years. In all your journeys, in all your service I was near you. I came for you today, for you held fast to that which I gave you, you kept the faith with steadfastness and for your reward I gladly give you the crown of life.” (Rev. 3:11 – Clete’s Confirmation verse)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, who do you love? That’s what Clete would ask you. As he stands with the whole company of heaven right, praising, praying, and worshipping His Lord and savior I know Clete would hope that you’d agree with him: Love your Church, that is to say, love Jesus. For the Church is nothing less than the body of Christ.

The love that Jesus showed Clete animated his whole life. Clete *knew* that His savior came to save him from sin and death, to give him the crown of life, for Clete knew that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus. (John 14) Clete loved his country, he loved everyone and he never wasted a day because he lived and spoke as a man of faith. Clete loved because his savior first loved (1 John 4:19) him by dying on the cross and rising again to give him the gift of salvation.

No one could talk to Clete without knowing about his time in the Navy. Truly, his time of service to his country in WWII shaped his life in a way little else did. He loved America and the American people deeply. His trip around the world to defend our freedom never left him and he always carried that experience with him. Traveling was something of a theme in his life. He traveled the globe in the Navy, I know because he showed me the scrapbook with pictures and coins and other mementos of India and other far off countries. He also worked for the Missouri Department of transportation on the special crew for many years, traveling all over this great state in his work. He traveled the circuitous route of a school bus driver for 28 years, blessing the children of our area with his warm smile for so many years. In 2009 he traveled on the 1st honor flight to Washington DC for the war memorial, a trip that meant so much to him. Yet despite all his travels he was a man who knew where his home was and he was committed to home. He served his congregation on nearly every board we have, if not all of them. He served the German Mutual insurance here in Lohman, he helped charter the lion’s club of Lohman, he served as a Lohman bank board member and actively participated in Operation Bugle Boy and countless other endeavors over 95 years to make his home community a better place. Although something of a traveler, he never forgot his home or those he loved.

On Friday May 1st he traveled again. Although he may not have realized where he was going to at first. After having a good night’s rest he woke up ready to start the day. As Ethel told me he even joked a little bit about what he was going to have for breakfast that morning “something to eat!” of course. He made a final trip that morning, with the angels as his heavenly escort, his tour of earthly duty ended and he pulled into the port of his heavenly homeland, a home he never forgot all his life. His conscience washed clean by the blood of Jesus shed for him, his warfare with failing health ended, Clete was allowed to finally come home, to rest in the peace which His savior won for him, to be reunited with his parents, his brothers, his sister whom he never knew and to see again his sweet granddaughter. He is comforted and at peace, every tear is wiped away from eyes (Rev 7), every fear gone, he is dressed in the white robe of the garment of praise, anointed with the oil of gladness instead of a faint spirit of mourning, complemented by a beautiful, heavenly headdress instead of ashes of failing health. (Isaiah 63)

My friends, we know where Clete is. He’s in heaven awaiting a joyful reunion with all those who share the faith in Jesus which He lived and died in. He’s waiting for the day when we will all be raised in the body to the joys of everlasting life in the resurrection. You all miss him. You miss the anchor that he was in your life, you miss his love and warmth and friendship. Death is the last enemy to be vanquished. Christ has conquered death by His resurrection. Death has separated Clete from us for a time, but though his body is laid to rest His spirit is more alive than ever because He is with Christ who is the God of the living and not of the dead. (Luke 20:38) Death tries to rob of all that we love, but in Christ death has lost it’s sting. (1 Cor 15) For even though we mourn we do not mourn as those who only hope in this life. (1 Thess 4:13-14) In Christ we will all be united again, in heaven and in the life to come of the resurrection. “Who do you love?” Love Christ. For Christ loved you first, he loved you so that, like Clete, you would be His forever. Christ died and rose to give us each peace and hope in the midst of a broken, fallen, sinful world. And He has given us the victory, for Christ is risen! He is risen indeed and that’s a fact. Just as Christ rose from the grave so will you, so will Clete. And to those who confess their sin and joyfully confess their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ we know that the joys of paradise await. For now we cry in this vale of tears, but soon enough Jesus will come and wipe away our tears and replace our mourning with gladness and joy. (Ps 23, Rev 7, Isaiah 63) He has promised this to us in faith. He always keeps His promises. He kept them to Clete and He will keep them to you.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.