

A Woman and a Fork

I heard the following story in a sermon delivered by a pastor of a church awhile back. Then a few days ago, Bob Grayson in Life Care's Graphic Services Department sent me a copy of it. The author is not known to me, but its message is powerful. Here it is:

There was a young woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. As she was getting her things "in order," she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes.

She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the young woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"There's one more thing," she said excitedly. "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the young woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the young woman, not knowing quite what to say.

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" the young woman asked.

"Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

She explained: "In my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'Keep your fork!' It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming ... like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!

"So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand, and I want them to wonder 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them: 'Keep your fork ... the best is yet to come.'"

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the young woman goodbye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the young woman had a better grasp of heaven than many people twice her age, with twice as much experience and knowledge. She knew that something better was coming.

At the funeral, people were walking by the young woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over, the pastor heard the question: "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled.

(continued below)

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the young woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either.

He was right.

So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you, ever so gently, that the best is yet to come.

--Beecher Hunter