

John P. Hogan was born on May 8, 1938, into an Irish Catholic family in Brooklyn, NY. With two sisters and three brothers, Jack embarked on a life that valued family and service to others. After graduating from St. Vincent's College, Jack began his life of service working as a Peace Corps volunteer in Venezuela. Throughout his life, he would return to the Peace Corps serving in various positions including being the first returned volunteer to serve as the director. Jack also worked for the National Endowment for the Humanities, State Department, Department of Justice's Community Relations Service, and Catholic Relief Services. Jack received a PhD from Catholic University of America in Religious Studies. He taught theology at Loyola University–Baltimore and Catholic University; international development at SAIS–Johns Hopkins University; and English and culture at Wuyi University in China. He also acted as presenter and editor for the McLean Center for the Study of Culture and Values. Jack was a dedicated teacher of ESL and citizenship at the Catholic Charities Refugee Center in Brookland and a longtime board member for the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Church Life.

Jack lived with Mary Jo, his wife of 53 years, in Brookland, Washington DC. They have three children, Pilar Closkey (Sean), Maura Donohue (Brendan), and Clare Reidy (Patrick) and nine grandchildren. Jack lived his faith through a committed call to action. Dedicated to welcoming peoples of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds, Jack's life work called him to study, address, and then work to solve issues both near and far, in developing countries and in our community, to even the playing field for all. His passion for social justice and service pushed him to make the world a better place and inspired others to do the same. A storyteller at his core, Jack never missed an opportunity to share wisdom, advice, inspiration, and an Irish song. We will miss him.

**HOMILY**  
**Fr. James Gardiner, SA**

I did a double-take that Monday morning; I was in the midst of opening a package that had come in the mail when Jane Brinley called me to make sure that I knew that Jack Hogan had died the day before; the book was Tony Gittens' latest, *Courage & Conviction: Unpretentious Christianity* and, for a moment, I caught myself thinking, "Good God, news travels fast! Jack dead fewer than twenty-four hours and already a book in print about him?"

The book, of course, wasn't about Jack specifically, but much of it could have been about him, starting with the title which could be the epitaph for the man whom we remember here today, the man whom Charlie Curran called "a model Christian;"

It's fitting that we have Jack's mass here because most Sundays Mary Jo & he were here for the noon mass; and they sat in the same pew Sunday after Sunday over here on my right; truth be told, that's how most of us recognize people – by where they habitually sit; when I mentioned at table that Jack had died, one of my confreres correctly identified him not only by where Mary Jo and he sat, but also said, "oh, yes, he's the guy who pays *rapt* attention to the homily every Sunday;" in Jack's case, of course, "rapt" is a euphemism; several of us who presided at the noon mass found it helpful to develop great peripheral vision especially in the right eye so as to get some indication as to what to expect outside when the mass was over – or whether to go outside at all

Jack had strong opinions and he was willing to share them – "share" being another euphemism – but he always did so respectfully and gently; "you could have included thus-and-so," he'd say on his way out, or "I'm surprised that you didn't mention such-and-such" – "thus-and-so" and "such-and-such" being issues that escaped many in the congregation; they were more than just "issues" to Jack; they were, in his own words, illustrations of "the crucial Catholic connection between the spiritual life and a commitment to social justice" (p.xii);

he was passionate about these things; how passionate he was you could tell by the distance Mary Jo put between them as they were leaving; if she were half-way down the exit ramp before he appeared in the doorway, be prepared; *but* it was always gentle and respectful – sometimes unnecessarily so! the last time he was at

mass here was just two weeks ago & the Gospel that Sunday was the parable of the Good Samaritan (which we just heard); apparently he wasn't exactly impressed, shall we say, by what he heard that morning; so we're sort of trying it again, shall we say, in his memory and hope it lives up to its potential.

Any way you approach it, the parable of the Good Samaritan hits all the right notes: it has some drama, some suspense, even some humor as the story ends with the questioner – a lawyer nonetheless – answering his own question and being more or less hoisted on his own petard! The late Joachim Jeremias, the world-famous biblical scholar whose book, “Rediscovering the Parables,” is a classic, points out “That a learned theologian [of the Law] should ask a layman [Jesus] about the way to eternal life was just as unusual then as it would be today; the probable explanation is that the man would be disturbed in his conscience by Jesus' preaching” (p. 59); what would have disturbed his conscience? Probably two things: *first*, the idea that “neighbor” – as in “love thy ‘neighbor’ as thyself” – extends even to those he was *taught* to disparage; & *second*, that he knew the answer to his question all along;

In “Courage & Conviction: Unpretentious Christianity,” the book that I initially thought must have been about Jack, Tony Gittens quotes Vincent Donovan who writes that Jesus, in Donovan's words, was “plagued with religious questions” by people caught within a legalistic mindset (p.138); among them: What must I do to inherit eternal life? Who is my neighbor? How often should I forgive? Which commandment is the first of all? Who is the greatest? “These and other religious questions seek unambiguous answers,” Gittens says, “but Jesus answers none of them. Instead, in every single case, he calls people to be imaginative rather than coldly rational, loving rather than narrowly legalistic, and open rather than firmly closed” (ibid); in Jack's words, it's “that crucial Catholic connection between the spiritual life and a commitment to social justice”

There's nothing wrong with questions &, as a matter of fact, we probably don't ask enough of them; most of us, I suspect, were introduced to questions as a more or less surefire way of protracting, postponing, or even evading things; scripture is full of questions: going as far back as Genesis where God asks our forebears “where are you?” to Jesus asking the disciples “who do you say that I am?” to the very last question in the Newer Testament, “What city could compare with the

great city?” (Rev.18:18); more than likely, Jack would answer “Brooklyn,” but I digress; when you think about I, we only ask serious questions about things we’re serious about; and that’s why we shouldn’t be afraid to ask questions about our faith – *even about faith itself* – because it’s an indicator that we’re serious about it.

Pre-conceived notions, however, can blunt our inclination to question things; for our forebears in the faith, the parable of the Good Samaritan was literally jaw-dropping; they and the Samaritans were such mortal enemies that they found it impossible to use the words “good” and “Samaritan” in the same sentence; oil and water could have mixed more easily! And it all stemmed from a generations-old dispute about not just the *best* place to worship, but the *only* place to worship: the Jews said Jerusalem, the Samaritans most likely Mt Gerassim; these days we’d say, “look, just worship! we can talk about the ‘where’ later;” but, even today when pre-conceived notions –especially notions about race, gender, orientation & even truth itself – can torpedo even our best efforts to be our best selves and ask the kinds of questions that need to be asked;

In the preface to his book of Catholic Campaign for Human Development case studies, Jack wrote: “It is no exaggeration to say that we live in a time when we desperately need credible signs of Christ alive” (p.xiii); that was fifteen or so years ago and, sadly, that is as true today as it was then;

But back to “Courage & Conviction: Unpretentious Christianity;” those word would be a fine epitaph for this “model Christian” and I think he’d be proud of that; but I think he’d be prouder still if, in his memory, we took them as marching orders; amen?

## **EULOGY**

### **Pilar Closkey**

Thanks for being here. We are blessed to have so many people from the different aspects of Dad's life here today. It is really wonderful to hear so many stories from all of you. As you can imagine, as kids and I'm sure it's true for his grandkids, we had awesome bedtime stories from his time as a Peace Corps volunteer in Venezuela or meeting Mom in Puerto Rico or studying in Paris or living in Burkina Faso, Haiti, or China – But these stories were also accompanied by reading books together of biographies of social justice heroes. And while these nighttime escapades helped to shape our lives, it was really the direct influence of our parents (and I say both parents because Mom and Dad truly had a partnership in doing everything together), so it was really the influence of how our parents lived their lives that shaped ours and touched yours – and continue to do so.

My Dad lived his life through his model of axis-praxis-reflection. That was his lather-rinse-repeat. For the rest of us that would be translated as living his life faith through a call to action with the extra step of reflecting upon it. This reflection ensures that faith, action, and improvement for the next time were always included.

But above all, Jack was a man for others. His faith called him to give others his gifts but then he also asked for us to join him in return.

Dad was an educator. He offered and gave help on homework, whether asked or not. He wrote, co-wrote and edited. He taught. He was an endless reader and continuous learner. He loved to be everyone's graduate assistant.

He was also a counselor and problem-solver. He was our go-to person for everything – advice, family issues, bereavement (boy, could we use him now!). He helped with finding jobs and furthering careers. He listened and offered solutions. He fixed things. Dad was a bit of McGyver, he could do anything with duct tape, a stick of gum, and a piece of string. He never left something undone or a person stranded on the side of the road.

He was a friend and neighbor. His faith pushed him to live out his life in service to others, but this wasn't good enough. He then befriended all, truly asking people to

engage in his life with him and inserting himself into others' lives. The true meaning of community engagement.

Which leads me to the fact that he gave us everything he had (including giving his winter coat away during a snowstorm to someone waiting for the bus resulting in Dad walking home without a coat) – so while he gave us all, he also asked from us in return. My dad would say that he could live life with a spoon, a lightbulb, and a good book (and I think that I might even question the lightbulb). But of course, the downside of packing light is then forgetting items that you then have to borrow from others – like a belt, shoes, a jacket – and this happened often.

But more importantly, while he gave us all he could, Jack would ask us to walk with him. So while he offered to find a job for someone, that meant asking for all of us to engage with him and get that person a job. He asked us to join him at a rally. He pushed us to engage in conversations and to consider things that we might not want to do – or want to keep doing. He urged us on when we wanted to give up. He asked us to clean the park with him, go shovel someone's walk, support Camden or the Apostles of the Sacred Heart, Maryknoll in China or Kenya. He asked us to join him in community. And his community was large! It spanned multiple continents, spoke many languages, worked on issues related to world religions, fair wages, equality for all, immigration, health equity and more.

But while Dad's life was full of heavy content, he also enjoyed life. I know that he told me multiple times to lighten up and don't let the turkeys get you down! He loved Irish music, visits to the beach, sitting in the backyard reading or talking, telling over-embellished jokes, and, above all, playing and spending time with his grandchildren. And he invited us all to join him here too! Fight for what is right but enjoy doing it!

He has left us with an amazing legacy. Undoubtedly he is relishing in seeing the afterlife and looking down on us to see the unfolding of our stories. I know that he will continue to push us to live out our faith through actions to improve others' lives, engage with people, and be good neighbors.

So let's toast Dad for all that he did for us and all that he challenged us to do and smile at the fact that he could pack lightly for this next journey – and that made him happy.