

Funeral Speech

Venerable Attendants, Honorable Friends, Dear Villagers, Precious Relatives,

We are gathered here to bid farewell to our dear spiritual elder, Father Matte Eksen¹, who devoted his life to the service of the Hassana people. On this bitter day in which we feel the cold face of death, you have taken the trouble to grace this place and dispel the dark clouds surrounding us. We are very grateful for you. God bless you. We extend our thanks from the bottom of our sad and grieving hearts. May God bless you all. And may He keep you from all evil and misfortune.

Despite being a fact of life, death, which effectively shows that **this mortal world is not our permanent address**, is agonizing for our human nature. We all find great consolation in sharing the deep sorrow of the cherished EKSEN family on behalf of the village mukhtar Elişa Beğtaş and villagers. May God rest the soul of the deceased and give patience and fortitude to his children, the villagers, and his relatives.

Pastor Matte Eksen, our dear elder, has departed from among us in the effort to bring to life the Christian standards in the words, "**Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me**" (Matthew 25:40). May his companion be the love of Christ, whom he felt in his spirit and served. May he rest in peace. **And condolences to all of us.**

¹ The late Pastor Matte Eksen, born in 1933 in the Hessana (Kösrâli) village of Şırnak-Silopi became pastor of Bethil Assyrian Protestant Church in 1958. In 1991, he reluctantly migrated to Europe. He settled in Holland. On the 5th of April 2022, in Belgium, he passed on to the great beyond. On the 10th of April 2022, on a Sunday, he returned to the village of his birth. And he was buried in the cemetery of his beloved village, in accordance with his will. Thus, he attained his final desire. For he had said, "**bury me in my land**".

The funeral in Hessana village was attended by a crowd of people primarily from various European countries, as well as Istanbul, Mardin, Midyat, Şırnak, İdil, Cizre, Silopi, and surrounding villages. His sons and daughters, who accompanied him on his final journey, accepted condolences after the funeral with the peace of mind of having fulfilled the will of the deceased.

Yes, death is an inevitable reality. According to our faith, it is the departure of the spirit from the body. It is nothing more than the transition from the gravity of mortal life to the levity of eternal life. Since we are all going to experience this transition, as St. Paul asserted, our hope and faith in eternal life requires that we do not mourn over the departed. Only with this spiritual faith can we free ourselves of the deep sorrow wreaked by death and find consolation.

Death, being a fact of life, shows that there is no full ownership of fortune, rank, or power in this world. None of the things we believe to be ours actually belong to us. Everything we possess according to worldly conditions and standards has been entrusted to our use by the Lord for a limited time. We are obliged to put these to good use without resorting to destructive actions. While we have the chance -meaning while we're alive- we must act with this knowledge. Or else one day you might find that the chance has either slipped away or that we've abandoned it.

Father Matte Eksen in his conscious awareness felt duty bound to guard what he had been entrusted with and continually serve his own field. He did not quit serving until his last breath. By turning human values into spiritual virtues in his inner world, he became the voice and symbol of faith. He passed away as a fitting, living representation of that voice and symbol. He is finally united with Christ, whom he loved so much. He is not dead. He and his bighearted services will live on in the souls of his admirers. He will be remembered with respect and gratitude. I would like to remind that the virtues he entrusted to us as a spiritualist who had learned what a great honor philanthropy is, are a salve for the sores of our bitter hearts.

Our greatest consolation is the memory and spiritual legacy of the deceased. As the deceased used to constantly emphasize while alive, one's life becomes meaningful and gains importance if they've contributed something to life, put to use their sense of solidarity and aid when needed, and proved helpful to others. On our life journeys, where we reach is not important. On this journey, the important and determining thing is into whom and what (what kind of person) we transform. Therefore, we can neither be happy nor discover the meaning of life without doing something of lasting value.

Generally speaking, humanity is a brotherhood, one in the unity of the spirit. Everything else is a trifle, a correlation, a triviality. Because the spirit is God's breath, God's reflection in a person. Even though we cannot see the bonds that connect our cellphones to each other, those bonds are still there. We are able to communicate thanks to them. In the same way, the invisible spiritual bonds that connect us humans are also there. And divine love connects us to one another. This is a divine secret. Those who discover this secret can do no harm or evil to themselves and others. They honor human dignity by continually working, sowing, reaping, producing, and sharing. They leave a mark, not a name. And they return to the dust without being besmirched. Just as a tree takes nourishment from life water, so do we humans take nourishment from the same divine essence and spirit. Hence, we are not only kept on our feet by our skeleton and musculature; but also the spiritual values which we serve in the flow of life. These are mercy, compassion, help and solidarity. This is all to say that just as we take care of our physical health, we must be mindful of our spiritual diet, because we will reap what we sow. We experience and will continue to experience the effects of what we give. Therefore, whatever we give to life, whether good or ill, is a self-investment. Whatever we do, we do to ourselves. As is known, everyone is destined to be buried in their own conscience.

Let's not forget; **"Whatever we give with our hands will follow us."**

If the things we give and our deeds follow us into the afterlife, we should be very mindful of them. Hence, Father Matte Eksen had filled his heart with divine love. With this awareness, he complemented his knowledge with love by keeping balance in the cycle of life. He would feel Christ in his heart, see Him with his heart, and talk to Him in the language of his heart. And now he hails us with the hymns of the spirit: **"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing"** (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

It should be known that those who speak with the language of the heart and celebrate knowledge/altruism/virtue in life do not die. However, they leave behind a great void

when we lose them. And they continue to guide those who remain with their passing. Therefore we will always remember with respect and benediction the long-suffering and faithful stance of the deceased. **May God bless his soul.**

There are strong ties between a person's inner world and his native land. Familiarity with one's native soil is comforting. The soul flourishes and loosens. It recovers. It becomes aware of its humanity. Thus, the farther one drifts from his native land and sees the world, the more conscious bonds form between him and his native land. He seeks ways of strengthening these bonds. I believe that the late Father Matte Eksen's repose will be the more peaceful in his own native land at the foot of Mount Judi, in the bosom of Hassana, the village of his birth, and in the embrace of St. Mushe Church. **God rest his soul. And condolences to the entire family and to all of us.**

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I thank and commend you once again for your valuable attendance and patience.

Yusuf Beğtaş

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