



St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben

April 30, 2026

It has been a week of funerals. Last Wednesday, I led the funeral here at St. Luke's for Ken Dodge, a Physician's Assistant, Ambulance Driver, Coach, and Vietnam Vet. His service was complete with flag ceremony and rifle salute by Marine Corps Honor Guard. The military theme continued on Monday, when I led a funeral at the Chapel of the Coast Guard Academy for Ned Lofton, a Bronze Star recipient and Wall of Gallantry Academy alumnus. It keeps going tomorrow when I will conduct a burial at sea of Andrew Buckel, a sport fisherman from Montauk whose daughter and husband are Senior Chiefs of the Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU) who found me via a recommendation from their Navy Chaplain in Virginia. On Sunday afternoon, I will be back at St Luke's for a funeral framed by and filled with music from four movements of Brahms' Requiem, celebrating the life of Michael Yip, one of the founders of the Hamptons Festival of Music and husband of Maestro Michael Palmer. After that service, we will turn St Luke's around in order to host the Annual Memorial Service of the East Hampton's town fire chief's association, in which I will lead prayers on Sunday evening.

I often said that I have the occupational hazard of meeting the most amazing people after they have died. Even with people I thought I knew well, I still find myself learning something new as people tell stories and celebrate their lives. One of the great privileges of this week was the opportunity to spend time with the spouses and children of those who have died. As I saw their attention to detail, watched tears well up in their eyes and noticed how much they cared, I wondered if my own kids would be reacting in the same way. As I listened to them speak in the different services, I found myself wondering what my children would say about me. As I held their hands hugged them as they cried, I wondered how I would survive if the one I love the most suddenly wasn't there. I wondered if I had told her – or my children or my family and friends – that I loved them enough.

When people say "live like you are dying," they are usually talking about taking on a bucket list and traveling or doing things they always wanted to do. It is good advice. What, however, if we not only lived like we were dying but loved in the same way? How would our lives be different if we had the courage to say all the "I love yous" "I forgive yous" and "I'm sorrys" that needed to be said, and lived our lives as if those things were true?