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Words of Remembrance

Memorial Service for Rev. Dr. Imre Bertalan

Tisztelt Gyaszolok!

The American Hungarian Federation is honored to celebrate an incredible life – the life of our beloved Rev. Dr. Imre Bertalan.

But why the Federation, one might ask? The answer is quite simple – his involvement with the Federation is representative of an important aspect of his lifelong work, dedication and service.

While Rev. Bertalan was concerned with the fate of Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, he deeply cared about the well being of our community – a community that has relied on its own resources to survive. Therefore beyond his enormous contribution to his flock and church, Rev. Bertalan was committed to preserving and strengthening traditional Hungarian American institutions and organizations – organizations such as the scouts and the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America.

This helps to explain why Rev. Bertalan also had a special place in his heart for the American Hungarian Federation – an organization with a rich history of serving our community for over one hundred years.

Most of you probably know that for decades he served as an active officer and director of the Federation and its Washington, D.C. chapter. And when the Federation was afflicted with internal dissension in the late 1980's, he tirelessly strove to calm the disputing parties.

Realizing that healing would take a little time but that the community urgently needed a voice in Washington as the tumultuous and historic events unfolded in Central and Eastern Europe, Rev. Bertalan helped found another organization – the Hungarian American Coalition.

But he never forgot the American Hungarian Federation. On the contrary, when calm was restored, he focused like a laser on rebuilding that time-honored organization into the strong and outspoken voice that characterizes the Federation today.

On a personal note, Rev. Bertalan encouraged me to join the Federation in the 1980's; he once again played an important role in my becoming involved in the Federation a few years ago. And there wasn't a church service here when after the service he would not inquire about the Federation or share his vision for the organization.

We will truly miss Rev. Bertalan's wise counsel, steady leadership, selfless service bereft of any agendas other than service itself, and unfailing commitment to the American Hungarian Federation and to its noble goals and purposes.

It would be a fitting memorial to Rev. Bertalan if the various groups of our community would come together in love, tolerance and brotherhood and even if not agreeing on all matters, nevertheless genuinely cooperate with each other for the commonweal and betterment of our community – a cause so very dear to Rev. Bertalan.

Isten veled Imre Batyank!

ifj. Koszorus Ferenc
Co-president, American Hungarian Federation
September 6, 2008
Washington, D.C.