

FUNERAL HOMILY

for
Fr. Paul Ruzzo

On Monday evening around 8:20 PM, I was sitting in the ICU waiting room with Fr. Paul's two sisters, Sr. Maryanne and Jean Marie. Fr. Paul had been on the operating table over 12 hours and my cell phone rang. It was the cardiologist who said, Fr. Thompson I'm sorry to tell you that Fr. Paul just expired! Jesus' words from the cross came to me: "It is finished!" His suffering was finished. His life here on earth as a priest, pastor and chaplain was finished.

The first words of this Gospel –

"Do not let your hearts be troubled"

were difficult for myself and Fr. Paul's family on Monday evening and for many of you when you heard that such a young 53 year old man and priest had died. Our hearts were troubled!

But the words that follow these –

"You have faith in God, have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places..."

Now, those words do bring consolation to me and I believe to all of us as people of faith, the same faith that Fr. Paul shared and lived. We do have faith in our loving God and we trust that He does have a place prepared for Fr. Paul and for each one of us. Because of these words our hearts are less troubled today.

Fr. Paul had a strong faith. Through all of his dealings with his illnesses over the years and especially over these past few months, he was relatively calm and kept saying to me, that God would take good care of him. He did have his troubling moments when his patience ran thin and his stubbornness was very much alive, but then he would always return to this theme of God will take care of him. His family and I do believe that God took care of him. If Fr. Paul had lived and from what his doctor said, there's no telling what condition or quality of life he would have in order to continue living and ministering. He would not have dealt well with that!

Fr. Paul truly enjoyed the gift of his priesthood. He loved his people and he loved celebrating the Eucharist as well as all the other sacraments. His ministry was life-giving for him. Like any of us, he was not perfect. And so if he offended or hurt some of you, I ask in his name that you forgive him. I'm sure now, more than ever, he understands the power of love and the power and need for forgiveness.

As we can see from all of us gathered here, Fr. Paul was loved much and had a fruitful ministry. I thank all of you, family, parishioners and friends for coming to celebrate this Mass of Resurrection. I thank you firemen, policemen and Knights of Columbus who gathered yesterday and here again today. He so loved to minister to you and with you. You were an important part of his ministry. He received from you as much as you received

from him. Your presence here this morning is an inspiration to all of us and it speaks of Fr. Paul's dedicated ministry even when it was risky.

Fr. Paul also had a strong love for Catholic schools and the children in the schools. During his priestly years, he was part of the school system in Manchester, Dover, Salem and Pelham. He said many times to me how much he enjoyed going to the schools.

He also had a love for EC Week at Camp Fatima – “Exceptional Children’s Week”. For many years he spent the week with his special EC child. He lived the words of Jesus – **“Let the children come to me!”**

He had a good sense of humor even through these past 6-8 months of carrying his cross of ongoing health problems. He just kept trying to live as normal a life as he could.

In baptism Fr. Paul died with Christ in order to rise with him. On Monday evening, the Lord called him on the very same day his mother was called by the Lord, November 23rd. On that day, the same Lord who said: **“It is finished”** to Fr. Paul is the same Lord who also said to him: **“I make all things new”**.

The Gospel for this Mass says that clearly and is very hopeful because it says how much God loves us unconditionally. He not only prepares a place for us, but He goes the next step and says:

“I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am, you also may be!”

We are never abandoned but are guaranteed His Personal Presence. What more can we ask for? Paul is now with the Lord at the heavenly banquet table where he can now eat to his heart's content! What more could he ask for, he who loved to eat?

And so, Fr. Paul, we entrust you today to our loving and compassionate God that you may now enjoy the peace of God's eternal home with Christ the High Priest.

May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The God who is our loving Father,
Let his face shine upon you.

And may you heed God's call to you today, Fr. Paul:

***“Well done, good and faithful servant!
Welcome home!”***

Given by
Fr. Richard Thompson
November 28, 2009