

Homily: Funeral Mass for Kathleen E. Tomkosky: July 19, 2024

Is 25:6a, 7-9; Ps 27; Rom 8: 31b-35, 37-39; Jn 11:17-27

On behalf of my family, I want to thank everyone who has come here today for my mom's funeral Mass. It means a lot. It is of course a bittersweet occasion because death is the hardest thing we deal with as human beings, and yet it is also a time of hope and joy on the supernatural level since we pray my mom is now sharing in the victory of Christ's Resurrection; and no longer has to suffer in this vale of tears. And as most of you know she suffered a lot in the last few years with Parkinson's and all the effects of it. This was after being miraculously cured of her extremely rare aggressive form of lymphoma cancer in 2013 – which some of you remember. So, we received from God, 11 unexpected years with my mom, and I thank the Lord for that kind gift. One of the Godly intercessors who helped her with that 1st miracle was St. John Paul II, and he was closely with her also these last few years as she ended up dying from the same thing he died from Parkinson's – and I entrusted her to his prayers every day. We pray that St. John Paul and Our Lady of Sorrows are taking my mom by the hand to the Trinity's eternal embrace, while consoling us still on earth with God's peace which the world cannot take away.

1. In the first reading from Isaiah, we hear that God someday “*will destroy the veil that veils all nations, the web that is woven over all nations; **He will destroy death forever.** The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces.*” **This is our hope and our consolation as believers in the Lord of life when we face the mystery of death.** It was so edifying to see the dignity and peace with which my mom embraced her Cross and all the components of it. As I mentioned to my Parishioners, when asking for their prayers for my mom, in the last few months, there was an otherworldly peace about her that was beautiful - as she asked God to both use her suffering to help other souls and for her to be able to do her full Purgatory here on earth; as she mentioned to me, asking God a few years ago when her health was really going downhill, again, after a few better years after the healing from the cancer. It was such a beautiful transformation that only God's grace can bring about in a soul - she always loved the Lord and our Lady and the whole Catholic Faith. Some of you may know as a young teenager around 13 she

wanted to join **the Sisters of Charity** who taught at her Parochial school in Cleveland. Her family dissuaded her from entering the Sisters as they said she was too young to do that, and eventually of course she got married to my dad; but she always thought deep down she had a vocation to the Sisters, and so in her pure and trusting Faith she always asked God in His generosity to give one of her children a Vocation, trusting in God's generosity! I was not the one she thought would get it!☺ God is also the God of surprises! When discouraged, she always reminded me how much Jesus and Mary love us and can get us through anything.

2. As St. Paul teaches us in the 2nd reading today from Romans, *“What can separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No in all these things, we conquer overwhelmingly through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* We could add cancer, Parkinson's and other serious illnesses to this list. How good the Lord is to help us in our great sufferings. Fortunately, through the Divine Mercy of Jesus and Our Lady's intercession my mom was open to this grace of transformation in Christ through the suffering of **the Cross**, unique to each one of us: my mom during the last 3 years of being bedfast, and all the many humbling and humiliating things that go along with that, was truly being conformed more profoundly each day to Christ Crucified, so that now she can share in Jesus's Resurrected Life. Her sufferings borne in love, in company with our Lady of Sorrows, helped innumerable souls in Purgatory, my apostolate as a Parish priest, and family and friends and anonymous souls to help bring about conversions to the Lord.
3. In the Gospel today Jesus says to Martha and to us, *“I am the Resurrection and the Life: whoever believes in me, even though he should die, shall live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.”* And then he says to her and to us: *“Do you believe this?”* **I hope all of us can say: Yes, Lord I do believe!** I believe that truly now my mom has New Life in You! That all of us are called to

share in that New Life, where there will be *no more sorrow, no more pain, no more tears or suffering, no more physical illness*. I believe that God used my mom's great suffering these last few years especially to help her and the souls in Purgatory beyond our comprehension, esp. when she **went silent** for the last few weeks which we know from reliable accounts from the Saints about the souls in Purgatory is often part of the purification there: the souls must be silent in order to reflect on their earthly sins and to make amends to our All-Holy God. **Please remember to offer Masses for my mom Kathleen's soul**. She would be the first one to say, she may need further purification - although only God knows if that is the case, since she went through a lot at the end of her life, and may have completed the process to mold her soul in holiness. Remember to always pray for the souls of those who died, esp. those who are in Purgatory receiving that final gift of the Lord's purifying love, so that they can be joyful and at peace forever in the Lord. My mom, I am sure, will be praying for all of us as we pray for her. And so, as we who are still here go through this earthly vale of tears, remember there always is a Divine light at the end of the tunnel because as St. Paul says, "*Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him*" (1 Corth 2:7-8). So true, in God's mercy! As my mom loved to pray every day in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, *Eternal Father, we offer you the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world. And for the sake of His sorrowful passion have mercy on us and on the whole world.* Thank you, mom, for showing me and all those you encountered in the last few years, the essential lesson: *of how to suffer with Faith and dignity in a world that numbs itself to suffering*. You actually broke a record in the Hospice program you were in, for being in it for over 2 years straight and surviving numerous brushes with death. But finally, the Lord and His beloved helpers, our Lady, and St. John Paul II, and St. Faustina decided: *it's time for you to no longer suffer in this vale of tears*. And so, we look forward to seeing you in a better place someday. **Rest in peace, Mom**. And thank you Lisa and all the nurses and aids who treated her with gentleness and love; she was so appreciative. God bless Mom & everyone here!✠