

August 28, 2018

Diane Guerra homily by Fr. Marty Solma

On behalf of all of us gathered here this morning, I want to offer condolences to the family of Diane Guerra, especially to her children (Alexis and Eric) and to her brother and sisters. Diane's death leaves a very large hole in this family...and in the lives of so many of her friends gathered here this morning. You have our prayers and support during this time of sorrow and mourning.

As a number of people have said to me in recent days, "Diane was a force to be reckoned with." That was true! But, that speaks to the strength of her character and to the depth of her convictions. Diane was a professional journalist and communications specialist; she was a mother and a grandmother; she was a friend to many. But, the one quality that stood out for me, above all of the others, was that she was a person of faith and a serious religious seeker. Her deep and longstanding involvement in the Contemplative Outreach is just one example of this dimension of her life. And so, we gather today, within the context of this faith, to commend her to God and to celebrate her life.

The best Wisdom of the Old Testament says that the souls of the just are in the hand of God and that they are at peace. What a remarkable image and what a comforting assertion. Diane is now in the hands of God and she is at peace. As we all know, Diane suffered a great deal in recent years. One of my very first recollections of her, when I first came to STL in 2010, was her painful coughing. At times, I feared that her lungs would simply give out. That suffering, of course, became more profound over the past year. Just ten days ago, I sent her an email, hoping to see her one last time before leaving STL. Little did I realize that one of the very last things I would do before leaving would be to preside at her funeral. Her suffering is over, and there is relief in that for her and for her family. But, Wisdom tells us that our hope is full of immortality and that God bestows grace and

mercy on those who, like Diane, have lived lives of faith believing and trusting and hoping.

This hope, this faith, becomes much more focused in St. John's story about the raising of Lazarus. Who of us would not say, like Martha: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." How often we would like to roll back the clock: just another day, another hour, another chance to say "I love you"...and I'm glad you were my mother / my sister / my friend. "Your brother will rise" Jesus assures this grieving woman. Sure...on the last day! But the last day is a long time from now and we live in the present. And this person we've loved and cared for is gone. Jesus responds in a way that explodes Martha's narrow and traditional understanding. "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." "Do we believe this?" our Lord asks Martha. Do we believe that death does not have the final word? Do we believe that those grafted into Christ through baptism are given a quality of life in Christ that can only be described as "eternal"? Do we believe that, in the mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ, we stay connected to one another in a living and organic way? Do we believe that we can continue loving and talking and sharing life with Diane even now...and, in some ways, even more profoundly? Do we believe that? Does it change the way we perceive the death of our loved ones; our own deaths; and the way we are called to live in the here and now? To show how real this new life is in Christ, our Lord raises Lazarus and gives him back to this family.

But, there is something even more wonderful. In reflecting upon this new life in Christ, St. John says that God has loved us so much in Christ and that we are "God's children" now. And then the most marvelous realization: our future, though hidden just now, will be a sharing the knowing and loving of God, seeing God face-to-face. That's hope! And that has the power to transform not only how we face the death of someone we loved...but, even more importantly, how we live our day-to-day lives now.

And, that brings me back to Diane's spiritual journey. Through Contemplative Outreach, through her faith, through a lifetime of trying to do the right thing for her family and friends, Diane lived this faith. And she lived it well. And, I suspect that she would be most happy that so many of us could come together today to thank God for the gift of her life, for her faith, and for the love and joy that she now enjoys with the Risen Lord for all eternity. Bravo to you, Diane! And thank you for the gift of your life and love and friendship that we can savor for all eternity with you.