

Sharon Fitzpatrick
Born 06 August 1945
Died 11 August 2014
Feast of Sts. Clare and Philomena
Funeral Mass 14 August 2014

INTRODUCTION

I accept, O my God, all the torments of this earth bunched together. I desire them as my portion, but I could never resign myself to being separated from you for lack of love. Ah, for pity' sake do not permit this poor soul to go astray; never allow my hope to be deluded. Never let me be separated from you, and if I am at this moment, unknowingly, separated from you, then rescue me this very moment. Enlighten my mind, O my God, so that I may know myself fully and recognize the great love you have shown me, and allow me to enjoy for all eternity the supreme beauty of your divine countenance.

O dear Jesus, never let me lose this precious treasure that you are for me. My Lord and my God, I experience too vividly in my soul the ineffable tenderness that pours forth from your eyes, the love that you, my only God, condescend to gaze on this miserable creature.

How can the torment of my heart be placated, the agony of knowing I am far from you? My soul is well aware of the terrible battle I endured when you, O my Beloved hid yourself from me! O my most tender Lover, how clearly is this terrible and frightening image imprinted on my soul!

Who will ever be capable of eliminating or extinguishing the ardent flames of this fire which burns in my breast for you? Ah, Lord, do not take pleasure in hiding yourself; you know what confusion and tumult this causes in all the faculties of my soul and in all my feelings! You see that my soul cannot bear the cruel torment of this abandonment, for you have enchanted it too much O infinite Beauty!

You know how anxiously my soul seeks you. This anxiety is no less than that of your spouse in the sacred Songs; my soul too, like that holy spouse, wanders in the public streets and in the squares and adjures the daughters of Jerusalem to tell her where her Beloved is: I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him I am sick with love. (Song 5:8)

In this state, how well my soul understands what is written in the Psalms: My spirit fainted! (Ps 77: 4); My soul yearns for your saving help. (Ps 110:81)

- St. Padre Pio

During the past years and most especially in the final days of Sharon's life, she spent time to assess the order of her life with the help of the Blessed Mother who became her spiritual companion and her Lady of Good Counsel. It was an opportunity for her to set right anything that may be amiss, by some positive action and virtue on her part. Sharon's life was a life filled with promise and hope; a spiritual adventure leading towards spiritual accomplishments. Her life was also a life of great concern for her children as she watched them grow and making decisions for themselves, interior pain and suffering and mental anguish when she and Fred lost their daughter, Sarah, some years past. In the end and by the grace of God, and only by the grace of God, did she win the good fight; conquering her own weaknesses with the help of God.

During times like this as we gather in prayer we, too, are given an opportunity to assess the order of our own lives.

Thomas Jefferson once said,
"Wisdom is knowing what to do
Skill is knowing how to do it
Virtue is doing it"

I think we all have the Wisdom of knowing what we ought to do.

I think we all have sufficient skill knowing how to do it.

And by the mercy and grace of God we can have the virtue of overcoming our own weaknesses and failings if we only ask for his mercy and grace.

This is what we have witnessed and learned with and from Sharon. We can see what has taken place the past years; those spiritual nudges from God to make spiritual advancements through the intercession of Mary, her Heavenly Mother; our Mother.

It is hard to explain in mere human words what we all witnessed but with our simple faith, we witnessed how she, too, grew in Spiritual Wisdom, Knowledge and Understanding through the mercies of God.

The encyclical, Rich in Mercy (Nov. 30, 1980), of Pope John Paul II, as well as his prior encyclical, Redeemer of Mankind (March 3, 1979), establish basic priorities and goals for mankind and human life today.

Pope John Paul's theological reflection brings God and His attitude toward mankind into the foreground. His reflections are particularly pertinent to this funeral mass. Using the scriptures as a starting point for meditating on the experiences of modern life, John Paul leads us to the central fact of our Christian life – the Paschal mysteries of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sharon's preparation for death, death itself and this Christian funeral liturgy is also a time for us for restoring our ideals. All of us have a longing for meaningfulness in our lives. Goals and values we must have and pursue energetically, otherwise we lose sight of our ultimate end – our life in eternity with God.

This is a time which challenges us right now to face up to our shortcomings, and provides a new call, a new opportunity to put proper emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of life through prayer and salutary self-discipline.

It is good that we have this Funeral Liturgy today. It calls us to conversion, invites us to rely on God's mercy, and to bear witness to His Mercy. Let this day, as well as all our days be a great opportunity and time leading us to conversion in the sense of re-establishing true priorities in our lives, and particularly the priority of God's mercy. In contrast to the impersonal and severe image of a judge, we wish to follow Jesus who came to reveal and proclaim the Father of mercy. This is the unique appeal of Jesus' life – a proclamation of the mystery of God as the Father of mercies. Our Blessed Mother taught this to Sharon and us - for years - through the messages and through the scriptures at Holy Mass.

An appreciation of God's mercy will effect changes in our lives as it did in Sharon's life. God's mercy will enable us to experience the profound joy of conversion, a conversion rooted in prayer and virtuous acts. From this conversion comes a profound spiritual peace.

Now let me speak briefly about PEACE! In the final days and hours of Sharon's life, I believe a sense of peace came over her in a miraculous way. Hence, peace came to us. With this peace which I believe was the presence of our Lord Jesus and the Blessed Mother, one could only witness her faith being nourished with an abundance of life especially when she received the Sacrament of the last Anointing bringing forgiveness; Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist or Viaticum bringing Holy Food for the journey to heaven; and by providing the Apostolic Pardon and Blessing; removing any obstacles in order to prompt union of her soul with God in heaven. Tell me, I beg you, what more could God have done for the salvation of Sharon's immortal soul? What God did for her, God does for us if we just allow Him.

God does not give peace against our will or in the face of our resistance. We may resist for many years of our life. It is God who creates peace, and it is for us to bring together the elements of longing, of expectancy, of hope which make it possible to receive God's peace, to share it with each other, as we are sharing it right now in the celebration of this liturgy.

As Sharon came to know the Blessed Mother in the past years, Sharon came to know God's word and His teachings, which always tell us how to live in such a way that we will know peace and joy; a peace and joy that begins here on earth and stretches into eternity where time is no more. His teachings are always present to us with consolation and with a challenge. We are all poor and weak and powerless but we are spiritual millionaires, because God's own riches and strength and power are ours for the asking.

It is so easy for us to become discouraged because of our failures, faults, our weaknesses. Such discouragement is always a sign that we are unconsciously depending on ourselves rather than on God. If, indeed, our peace and joy were dependent upon our own accomplishments, our own strength, we would have good reasons to be discouraged and fearful, but they do not. God wants us to ask. But we must be careful what we ask for. If great material, wealth, power and control over other's lives, praise, and flattery – if these things are what we seek, we are unwittingly asking for the stone, the poisonous

snake, of which Christ speaks of in the scripture. If, on the other hand, we ask for God's better gifts, His grace, mercy, and peace, He will keep His promises made to us in the Gospel.

Peace, spiritual peace, is one of the marvelous gifts of grace that is experienced by God's people. It is the most marvelous gift received after years of seeking. Being disposed to God's marvelous love and mercy, Sharon experienced this most comforting grace. She became more serene; a soul at peace with God and with all those around her. It is definitely a special blessing from God.

What I have learned in more depth from Sharon's final days and hours, and death itself, is that this grace must be earned. It is recorded in heaven! This may be a surprise to many. With all she did for her spiritual well-being and all the good she did during her entire life did not go unnoticed by God. With the many prayers on her behalf throughout her life from those who loved her and with all the graces she earned and received brought her spiritual peace in her final hours. She became a holy soul; a soul of patience, kindness, courtesy, very considerate, a forgiving soul, and a soul with a spirit of prayer. Nothing in her past life stands out any more as does her final hours of life. A peaceful woman; a woman of peace; a lady filled with God. Her soul became dazzling white; brighter than the sun and whiter than snow.

"Lord make me an instrument of your peace..." so begins the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi whom St. Padre Pio loved so much. May we be peaceful and serene Christians where we will sow love, hope, and faith; where we will be men and women who will console, will understand, and will be forgiving.

Being spiritually peaceful or peace-filled people will allow us to go about doing good as Jesus did, and will bring to others the gift of peace.

I thank God and the Blessed Mother for the graces which were shown through Sharon to her husband, children and to all of us.

We pray as our loving Father receives her soul into eternal life where she is at peace -resting in the hand of God.

I also ask through Sharon's prayers and intercession that we all may be welcomed into our eternal home in the peace of Christ accompanied by all the angels and saints.

Homilist: Father Christopher P Myers, SOLT

Lamentations 3:17-26

Psalm 103

Romans 6:3-9

Alleluia verse John 6:39

Luke 23:33, 39-43