



Catholic Parish of King's Lynn

Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation
London Road, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE30 5HQ

Holy Family Church
Field Lane, Gaywood, King's Lynn, Norfolk. PE30 4AY

Funeral Requiem for Pauline McSherry

Thursday 13th March 2025 – Holy Family Church, King's Lynn

Pauline left us detailed instructions for this funeral Mass – that is probably not a surprise to anyone. One of these instructions is that there is to be no eulogy – so there is no eulogy.

These instructions also mean that the scripture readings that we have just listened to are Pauline's own choice of scripture to be read as we gather to pray for her eternal soul. That of course is why Pauline does not want any eulogy – she wants us to concentrate on our praying for her in eternity and not be distracted by remembrances of what she was in this mortal life – but no longer is.

We pray for Pauline's eternal soul with great confidence. Pauline had an incredibly strong faith and her devotion to Our Lady and her rosary was second to none. Among the last words I spoke to Pauline, during our last coherent conversation, were the words of the Apostolic Pardon, just after I had anointed her. I prefaced the Apostolic Pardon by telling Pauline that "I did not want to scare her, but just in case...". So she entered into eternity fully fortified by the ministries of Mother Church which is as she would have wished.

Returning to the passages of scripture that we have just heard. That Gospel reading – "The Beatitudes" – has a hidden significance - which is that it is the passage of scripture often used by the Society of St Vincent de Paul Conference in this Parish, of which Pauline was a long standing member, for their devotional reading as they begin a meeting, and I am sure there is a deliberate linkage in Pauline choosing these words for her funeral.

The first beatitude refers to those who are "poor in spirit" – in other words, those who recognise that everything one has, and is, are gifts from God, and that they are therefore dependant on God. As an individual, no human has in their own right the resources they need to fulfil their needs in this world or in the next. The following beatitudes are mostly specific ways in which one might be poor in spirit. Overall, the Gospel reading we heard are telling us that true happiness is not found in wealth, or fame, or status – the things by which the world so often judges success – but in God. The more one recognises reliance on God, the more one will find fulfilment and joy in that recognition of God and what God does for us. I know that Pauline knew that, because right now I can hear her saying, as she often did when considering some difficulty, "Thank goodness for our Catholic faith -what would we do without it?" She knew that in all things we are reliant on God.

But our Gospel reading was preceded by that beautiful passage from the Song of Solomon. Amongst her funeral instructions, Pauline left us that passage marked up in an old "Day by Day" booklet - I think from 2007, so I do not know whether she was simply struck by the beauty of the reading or if it spoke to her more deeply. Either is possible. The whole Song of Solomon can be interpreted in different ways. For the Jewish people it is an allegory of God's love for the chosen people. For the early Church Fathers, it is an allegory of the relationship between Christ and the Church, his bride. For yet others it is all about the beauty of married love. It is undoubtedly a lovely passage about intense relationship, with much that is beautiful and positive- the winter is past, the rain is gone, the flowers appear, the time of singing has come. Whatever the reason Pauline chose it, it speaks of relationship – and the constant flow of visitors to Goodwins Hall, then in Pauline's last days in Tapping House shows just how many relationships and friendships she maintained to the end of her life – but Pauline's principal main relationship was a relationship which influenced and shaped the entirety of her life. Her friendship with Jesus Christ was a joy to her, and she has given us a reading which can speak to us today of the joy of deep relationship with God, and in particular with Jesus.

So as we pray for Pauline – and we can be quite sure she wants us to do that – she also provides us with a memory of her as a woman of deep faith with reliance on God and joy in her faith. Two lessons we might do well to tuck away and keep for future reference. But from somebody who spent a lifetime in teaching, aren't two lessons to tuck away and keep just what we could expect?

Pauline: to take the last lines of that reading from the Song of Solomon: May you now see HIS face, may you now hear HIS voice, for HIS voice is lovely and HIS face is sweet. Rest in peace and rejoice in the fullness of his presence. Oh – and don't forget -make sure all the apostrophes in Heaven are in the right place!