

Funeral homily for Doris Rafferty

As you mourn the loss of your beloved Doris, I offer you words of consolation from the Hebrew poet, the Psalmist: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, he rescues those whose spirit is crushed"

Peace be with you!

In days gone by, college students were required to read the classics of antiquity. On the reading list were likely the famous works of luminaries such as Horace, Cicero, Plato, Sophocles, Livy, Marcus Aurelius and several others in their native language. One of the most often repeated and best known Latin phrases from the works of the Roman statesman and poet, Cicero, is "*Amor, vincit omnia*", which means "Love conquers all". Even death!

Love is more powerful than death.

In John's account of the raising of Lazarus, Jesus is openly weeping at the tomb of his dear friend. Deeply moved by Our Lord's tears, the Jews commented on how much he loved him.

Jesus comes as a warrior to do battle with man's most fearsome enemy, death. In this compelling scene from the eleventh chapter of John's gospel, Love, in the person of Jesus, comes face to face with the Grim Reaper, death. By his raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus successfully achieved the status of conquering hero. Death no longer has the upper hand, the last word. Love is stronger than death. In Saint Paul's letter to the Christian community of Rome, he asks the question, "What will separate us from the love of Christ?" His short answer is "nothing". "In all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. Death is swallowed up in victory. Where o death is your victory, o death where is your sting?"

By gathering together for Doris's funeral mass, we affirm our belief in life everlasting. Death cannot rob us of all the beautiful memories we each have of Doris. Even now she is present in our thoughts. Love never dies.

On the morning of Christ's Resurrection, Mary of Magdala, observing a time honored tradition, visited his tomb, weeping. Her tears testified to her love of Christ and the sorrow of losing him to death. But upon seeing the empty tomb and then, unexpectedly, her crucified and risen Master, she rejoiced. God revealed to her a profound truth, namely "Love conquers all", even the horror of death.

Some of you may recall the enormously popular and unforgettable musical of years past, "*Phantom of the Opera*", which was based on the novel of the same name. Very few know that there was a sequel several years later, "Love Never Dies", the signature song of which bears the name of the show. Listen to the haunting words of the song, "*Love Never Dies*":

"Love never dies

Love will continue

Love keeps on beating

When you're gone

Love never dies

Once it is in you

Life may be fleeting

Love never dies.

God is love, and love is eternal.

A few years ago a parishioner, whose husband I buried after a funeral mass, told me that the homily I preached at his funeral mass inspired her to have inscribed on his tombstone the words, "love Never dies". She was certain the epitaph was true and worthy of remembrance.

As Christians we believe that Christ is Love incarnate. On the day of a loved one's funeral, we are consoled by the truth that life does not end with death. Love is the answer to the mystery of life and death.

May our dear friend, who loved others as Jesus loved her, pass through the gates of the kingdom promised her by Jesus, the Way, the truth and the Life, amen.