



Homily for 4/24/2021

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

Funeral of Bosco Joseph Paul Cooper, Stillborn 4/20/21

God does not make mistakes. Every human being is willed by God and loved by Him in an infinite love. Bosco Joseph Paul Cooper was conceived in love. And not just the love of his parents. God was involved, and He loves every child conceived, even if their parents didn't. No child is unwanted by God who creates out of love for His creatures. And therefore, no child is unwanted by God's people, the Church. At the moment of his conception, God imbued Bosco Joseph Paul with an immortal soul, made in His image and likeness. Make no mistake: this was a human being, precious in the eyes of God, made equal in dignity to the most powerful person on earth, yet experiencing the same early vulnerability common to the whole human race, the first environment of the womb, a vulnerability compounded by expectations for perfection and fallen society's disdain for weakness.

There is no doubt that the effects of original sin afflicted him just as it does all of us. The suffering he endured and the imperfections he experienced were manifestations of this.

Yet his parents loved him and cherished him just as they have known the love and cherishing of Our Father who is in heaven. "How can a mother forget the child of her womb?" Dee wept with the hope of God through the words of His prophet. Kody claimed Bosco for his very own in the necessary adoption of the heart that doesn't always follow the ties of the flesh in this valley of tears. Even in the imperfect intimacy and symphony of redemptive suffering, the Holy Trinity was made manifest in its latest recapitulation within another holy family of husband, wife, and child.

In God's infinite wisdom, He willed that this child should not endure his suffering long. Even before he saw the light of day, God chose to call this child to himself.

The normal means we know of conferring sanctifying grace to overcome original sin by the waters of baptism was denied him due to time and circumstance, not negligence or contempt. So, we are not without hope. God is not cruel. God does not make mistakes. And no life is a mistake. God takes care of all the creatures He has created.

In fact, this is confirmed by mother Church's beautiful and comforting doctrine when she speaks to her sons and daughters in this tender moment: "Indeed, the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved, and Jesus' tenderness toward children which caused him to say: 'Let the children come to me, do not hinder them,' allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism." She even declares that "desire for Baptism, brings about the fruits of Baptism." Catechism 1258 and 1261.

No doubt little Bosco's parents desired it. Kody and Dee were prepared. If he had but taken one breath after his birth, he would have been washed immediately with the waters of rebirth.

But God chose rather that he be baptized by tears instead: tears of a mother, tears of a father, tears of family members and a community of faith. The Lord hears the cry of the poor! We have been impoverished by this loss, but rich in the overflowing power of God's grace.

And so, bolstered by this hope, mother Church bids us, by her sacred rites, to mourn not like those who have no hope. There are special rubrics for the burial of children. These tell us important truths that shape our mourning in this valley of tears.



First, we are immediately struck by the color of the vestments: white. We are accustomed in the tradition of the Church to see black or violet as a reminder that our personal sins still merit the purification of purgatory and that we should continue to offer suffrage for the deceased, owing to this. But because children, before the age of reason, did not have personal sins, and do not share the same corruption that those who misuse their freedom experience, they are not subjected to the same demand of Divine Justice for their purification. In token of the child's integrity and virginal purity, we wear white.

Second, we don't celebrate a funeral Mass, per se. The commentary on this unique rubric states that "these rites are not to be regarded as a prayer of petition of the Church for the soul of the child. Rather, it is to be seen as a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for having taken the child to the glory and happiness of everlasting life. Viewed in this light, Catholic parents will desire that the child of theirs be laid to rest with these beautiful prayers and ceremonies, in full accord with the mind of the Church. In this very act of giving glory to God, they will find resignation to His will, and with it, peace and consolation for themselves."

What we do instead of the Requiem Mass is offer the Mass of the Angels to ask these spiritual beings to accompany this blessed soul. Now, before we get swayed by the erroneous, albeit romantic, thought that human beings become angels after death, let us correct that thought with the truth, which is far better. We have been made higher than the angels in Christ Jesus. The souls of the faithful are guarded by the angels and brought to the face of God by the agency of these creatures. In perfect obedience to God, the angels serve humanity. So today, we entrust this child into the hands of his guardian angel to be brought before the throne of the one who said, "See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

When we lay this child's body to rest today, we will do so in the place of Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery set apart for receiving children such as him. A place of distinction and honor as those who are the holy innocents, who remind us of the love of our saving God, who desires that we, too, turn - "be converted and become like little children" - to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Kody and Dee, entrust this baby of yours to his guardian angel with me. Weep, cry and lament, but hope in the Lord our God and trust that God does not make mistakes!

May Jesus Christ be praised!