

RECTOR'S LETTER

May 9, 2021
Happy Mother's Day!

Dear Friends in Christ:

Anh chị em thân mến trong Chúa Kitô:
Estimados Amigos y Amigas en Cristo:

A very happy Mother's Day to all of you! This is a day where we give thanks and show gratitude to and for our mothers. My mother Beverly has been such a defining source of my life and vocation, that I share in this space today abridged words from my funeral homily (3/7/2020) for her, especially in light of the Easter mysteries we celebrate at this time:

"What was it, then, that gave me such sharp inward pain? She and I had grown accustomed to living together; an exceedingly gentle and dear custom it was, and its sudden disruption was like a newly-inflicted wound...Being now bereft of her comfort, so great a comfort, my soul was wounded; it was as though my life was rent apart, for there had been but one life, woven out of mine and hers." (*The Confessions*, IX.30)

These words are written in the late fourth century by St. Augustine in his most famous work, *The Confessions*, as he writes about the passing of his beloved mother, Monica, from sudden illness. Augustine's words have been in my mind and heart since the equally unexpected passing of my beloved mother, Beverly. Beverly had struggled with chronic illness for over twenty years and our family had always discussed how she would one day have to "pay the piper", so to speak, following each serious episode that would see her pull through only by some form of serious medication, surgical intervention, or change in quality of life. Friends knew that she struggled, but Beverly never wanted to show this side to her loved ones – not out of pride or ego, but because she simply wanted to bring joy to people's lives. The true vulnerability and suffering she revealed only to my dad and I, all the while desiring to remain a servant to us, even on her worst days. With all of that said, there was nothing to indicate that this latest hospitalization would be the moment that the piper had to be paid.

And yet, part of me thinks that my mom had a sense that things might be different. Aside from suffering exhaustion in body, recent circumstances had led us to have many conversations about things eternal during the last month. St. Augustine describes how in the final days with his mother, not knowing that her end was near, they joyfully discussed the prospect of life eternal among the saints. While not saintly like Augustine and Monica, Beverly and I also discussed subjects such as what happens after we die, what our judgment will look like, matters of heaven and purgatory and the beatific vision of God, and how the resurrection of the glorified body will look...

...While she appreciated that she was created in the image and likeness of God and that her body was therefore holy, her body was so marred, broken, and devastated that she struggled to comprehend how God could glorify it. But in all this, she did not experience fear, but great faith and hope in God's promises.

And it is for this reason that I could go on and on about how wonderful my mother is, how she had the kindest, most generous heart of anyone I have ever known, and how she impacted so many countless people by her unconditional love, empathy, and servant's heart as a nurse, teacher, mentor to high school youth, court appointed child advocate, and most especially as wife and mother. I speak of her as a devoted mother, but my dad Philip could give even more beautiful words about her as wife and mother. But Beverly would want me to speak of nothing other than the goodness of Jesus Christ...

Beverly believed this with all her heart. No matter what she suffered, her only thought was how that suffering could be offered for others, how she could be of greater service. And thus, she did not fear death. As she realized that her hour was near, she told my dad and I that we needed to talk. After she told us that it was time for her to go, her final words with loved ones were not about her but about caring for those she would leave behind. For all the effusive words of love we have shared in my lifetime, our final heart to heart exchange was amazingly brief: she looked into my eyes and said, "You know what I know. You know what I know." As I fought back the tears, I said, "Yes, Mommy – I know." She said, "I know that you know – you have devoted your entire life to it." We exchanged "I love you", and that was that. What she knew, what I know, was that death is nothing to be feared. On Ash Wednesday, as the ashes are placed on our heads, we are reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return. But even as our bodies turn to dust, in His Cross and Resurrection, in His Body and Blood, Christ has prepared a home for us so that we might joyfully gaze upon God face to face for all eternity.

In her final words to her grieved son Augustine, Monica gave an instruction which has always stuck in my heart: "Lay this body anywhere, and take no trouble over it. One thing only do I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be." My dearly beloved Mommy, my love for you surpasses words. You are more than my best friend – you are my mother. You gave me life not just in body, but in the love of God you shared with me all of our years together. Until the time comes for me to be reunited with you, I will remember you always at the altar of the Lord. While I will miss you terribly, I will know that even as my feeble senses cannot see you, that in that beautiful eternal sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, I will be one with God, with all His saints and angels, and most especially with you.

Indeed, I do know what Beverly knows. And I know that she had only two desires: that all her loved ones might pray to Almighty God for the repose of her soul...and that all might come to know that beautiful truth that she knows so well.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place all our trust in You.
Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Very Reverend Jeffrey L. Bame
Rector & Parish Administrator

