

FUNERAL SERMON---PETER RUDEGEAIR
(Holy Mass on Thursday, December 20, 2007)
by Father John F. Harvey, OSFS

I offer my condolences to Karen and their four children, Mary Rose, Anna, Rachel, and Josh. I also want to share my condolences with the brothers and sisters of Peter, and with Karen's brothers and sisters and all the relations and friends of Peter and Karen. All who have known Peter have a profound sense of loss---loss of a dear friend. Our dear friend Peter has gone to the Lord and our prayers go with him. In our limited human view, his death was accidental, but in God's eyes it has a deeper meaning.

God's view is found in the Holy Scriptures---in Wisdom, Chapter 3, we read, "the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them." But unbelievers scoffed at the idea that they were with God, because they did not believe that God exists. The author of Wisdom goes on to say that these souls are at peace; "for, if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality. Chastised a little, they will be greatly blessed because God tried them and found them worthy of Himself."

Peter is an example of Christian fidelity. From the time he came in contact with Msgr. Walsh, until the last night of his earthly life he lived a life of prayer and action. Peter was a charismatic who loved the music of the church and wanted to convey to his clients and his friends the joy of the Holy Spirit. The very first time he talked at a National Conference of Courage members and the parents' group EnCourage (who have sons and daughters in the 'lifestyle') he impressed everyone by his integration of Spiritual Truth and Psychological Truth.

With regard to the second reading from Holy Scripture from Chapter 14 of St. Paul's letter to the Romans, I will use an earlier translation: "No one lives as his own Master and none dies as his own Master. For, if we live, we live for the Lord and, if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. for this is why Christ died and came to life, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living."

During the last decade I have worked with Peter at Annual Conferences of Courage and trips abroad to Australia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. I have had many conversations with him. It was clear to me that he believed "no one lives as his own master."

Peter felt responsible, most of all, for the family---Karen and their children. When he came every year to the annual Convention of Courage he spoke at least two or three times to the members of both Courage and EnCourage. He would also spend time between sessions, speaking to members who sought his advice. Usually, Courage had a party on Saturday evenings, which Peter and other priests attended---but he would always get up very early Sunday morning and take a plane to Philadelphia, PA to see his wife and children. Usually he met them

at late morning Mass; he spent the rest of the day with his family. *Wherever* he was, he would call Karen and the children at an hour very different from American time!

Every morning during our stays abroad I said Mass in my room, and Peter answered the prayers. Then we would go to breakfast. Peter loved a good meal. Peter thought the breakfast at restaurants in a hotel owned by the Diocese of Hong Kong were excellent.

I turn now to the Gospel of this Mass. Our Heavenly Father reveals to those who are childlike, the deep mysteries of our Faith. As a charismatic, Peter meditated on these Truths and frequently referred to the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In his presentations at Courage Conferences he put together spiritual truth and psychological insights. He followed the advice of Jesus: “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves; for my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” (Matthew 11:25)

In his professional counseling he imitated his Savior. He was both gentle and firm: gentle in his approach to the person; firm in his adherence to the Teaching of the Church.

Peter, the prayers of your family and friends go with you. It may be that you will have to spend some time in Purgatory, but you will not mind that, because you will know that you are on your way to heaven. As St. Francis de Sales points out, “the souls in purgatory are happy in the knowledge that they are cleansing their hearts to meet their Redeemer, Jesus Christ...they desire to purify their hearts.”

Eternal rest - grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. AMEN.