



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Funeral Mass for Father Teofil Wesolowski

Homily

[Job 19: 1, 23-27; Psalm 103; Romans 5: 5-11; John 3: 13-17]

It is good that we are here at the Carmel for Fr. Ted's funeral. My thanks to Mother Catherine and the Sisters for welcoming us. Even though Fr. Ted had a number of assignments in his years here in the Archdiocese, it is fair to say that this Carmel had become his spiritual home. So, I offer my condolences to you, Sisters, at his death. He was dear to you, I know, and we are all deeply appreciative of the care you gave to him, especially through the support of your prayers.

Now, speaking of the Sisters' prayers, we know they are very powerful. So, did Fr. Ted. His certainty that God answers the prayers that arise from this Carmel lies behind a story the Sisters recently shared with me. The incident had occurred not too long ago. He had taken a fall and was confined to bed. He told a visitor to convey a special message to the Sisters. The message was this: Stop praying! He knew they would be praying for his recovery, and that God would answer, so he asked them to stop praying for him so he could die and go to heaven.

I've been thinking about that since. That incident occurring near the end of his days actually sheds important light upon the whole of his life. He lived for heaven. Fr. Ted knew that he, like all people, had been created by God for eternal life, and that our earthly journey is but a pilgrimage toward that heavenly destiny. Within Fr. Ted, this knowledge settled into deep conviction and shaped his entire life. From that conviction he could not be shaken. The reason had nothing to do with what some might call Polish stubbornness, but arose from the truth and light emanating from the Gospel.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that those who believe in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3:16) These are the words spoken by the Word made flesh. They announce the loving intention of God to rescue his people from the ravages of sin and death by the self-gift of his Son, so that the divine purpose might be fulfilled. Fr. Ted took Jesus at his Word; he believed what the Lord said. From this act of faith was born the desire to see the Lord's purpose fulfilled in his life, the desire to go to heaven.

There is an important lesson in this for us. That lesson resides in Fr. Ted's conviction that the Word of God is true. What we need to learn from this becomes clear when we place Fr. Ted's faith in the truth of God's Word against the background of his long life. He grew up in Poland and there endured the tyranny of the lie under the Nazi regime that sent him to a concentration camp. That regime was premised on the lie of human all-sufficiency and Aryan supremacy. He left Poland after the war, when his beloved country came under the subsequent Communist oppression based on the lie of atheism.

Each system relied on massive and persistent mechanisms of propaganda, which disseminated falsehood. Fr. Ted accepted none of it. He knew where truth is to be found, because he had, in fact, discovered it in the person of Jesus Christ and in the teachings of the Church. In this light, the lesson for all of us is clear. We remain under the tyranny of the lie, even if today it is spread by different means. Fr. Ted's example reminds all of us to seek truth where it is to be found – in the Word of God – and to cling to it tenaciously as the only sure and trustworthy compass for our lives.

His example also teaches us the effect in our lives when we embrace God's Word as true and shun all that is contrary to it. Fr. Ted teaches us that it is only then that we begin to see. In his later years, Fr. Ted's physical eyesight grew very weak. Yet, his inner vision remained clear. Trust in the veracity of God's Word became the light by which he perceived inwardly the truth about God and the hope that humanity has in him. What we see of God during our earthly journey is of course, incomplete, yet, as Job proclaims, what we can glimpse now awakens within us the hope for perfect vision when God draws us into his very presence after our sojourn here on earth is complete. And that is a hope, St. Paul tells us, that simply will not disappoint, because it is born of the conviction of God's love for us, a love that indwells our souls in virtue of the gift of the Spirit.

This allows us to grasp what lay at the heart of Fr. Ted's exercise of the priesthood. His priestly ministry was entirely oriented to enabling people to see with clarity the truth of God's love and the hope that derives from it. We all need to recall this. Anxiety abounds in the hearts of people today, due in no small measure to lack of clear inner sight. Fr. Ted dedicated his ministry as a priest to help people know, as he had come to know, that there is no greater source of hope and comfort than that which is given when we see in faith that God loves us in Christ, guides us by the Spirit, and awaits us in heaven.

Now we pray, as we offer this mass for him, that the goal Fr. Ted long awaited, the destiny from which he did not want the good prayers of the Sisters to hold him back, be granted him by God's mercy. May this good and faithful priest, who even when next to blind perceived the truth of the divine Word, held fast to it, and announced it to others, now be granted the perfection of sight in the Beatific Vision of the Word made flesh.

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith

Carmel of St. Joseph, Spruce Grove

February 12th, 2021