

## THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" Jn. 15:13

We know that the individual who enters this life thru the door marked ~~death~~ birth must one day leave it thru the door marked death. The day and hour are hidden from us... but we know that soon or late the experience of death is inevitable for every human person. This fact is not a depressing thought to the healthy mind... it is recognized as one of the limitations within which this part of our eternal life is framed.

As Christians we believe that death is the opening of a door into the fuller and more abundant life. We do not, therefore, grieve so much for our departed leader, as for those who are left to face the uncertainties of a troubled world without the confidence his leadership had instilled.

Our assembly in this place at this hour is in grateful memory of President John F. Kennedy. He gave his life for freedom, peace and justice... he sacrificed his all for the benefit and blessing of all men of good will. He feared and hated war, but even more he feared and hated tyranny. He loved his own life, but even more he desired life for his people.

The issue of the 20th Century which has led to struggle and has blighted human society is that of human freedom. Our fathers dreamed of a land -- and of a world -- in which free men might live together under law.. where their differences might be settled by discussion and vote, not by the means of violence, physical or emotional. They developed strength by refusing to bow to any save God himself.

There have been those both within and without our borders who have sought to destroy this divine dream. The cost of holding this dreams has at times been unbelievable... on the battlefield... in the courts... through our processes of education... our bodies of religion.

Is this ideal... this dream... worth keeping? **Worth living for?** Worth dying for? WE ARE MET IN MEMORY OF ONE WHO ANSWERED YES, NOT ONLY WITH HIS LIPS, BUT WITH HIS LIFE.

To further this dream... he fought bigotry and hatred... prejudice and intolerance... violence and injustice. **We know that hatred begets hatred, that injustice breeds more injustice.** Dare we hope that Mr. Kennedy's noble sacrifice will further the causes of peace and freedom, of justice and opportunity, of law and order? Only if we hold to such hope and seek thru our efforts to turn it into fact can we show any adequate appreciation, thankfulness or true sorrow for and to ~~his~~ his memory. His work is complete... but the task within which he labored is yet unfinished. So long as any man lives in fear of tyranny... so long as any man is denied freedom because of his color, so long as hatred, injustice and prejudice remain... the task is unaccomplished.

President John F. Kennedy has given everything a human can give for these ideals. If we deem these ideals to be worthy, then we can make his sacrifice meaningful in our lives. It is not enough that he should fight, live and die for freedom... We must ourselves be worthy of it... and we must ever seek to preserve and share it with others... Only so may we truly express our gratitude to this one who gave the ~~last~~ last full measure of devotion.

AT "KENNEDY MEMORIAL"  
BAPT. 13

## THE THANKSGIVING OF A GRIEF-STRICKEN NATION

It is tragic (and in some ways ironic) that the season set apart for our nation's "Thanksgiving to Almighty God" for bounty and blessing, spiritual and material, has become for us in this instance a period of solemnity and mourning.

For a very few minutes let us, on this Thanksgiving Sunday, seek to discover whether there is indeed any valid reason for thanksgiving in this day of nation-wide grief.

President John F. Kennedy is fallen in battle. He was a great and good man. This is not to say that any or all of us approved of all his decisions... but he was obviously an individual of character who would take certain moral stands regardless of the personal or political sacrifice involved. ~~It is not my purpose this morning to eulogize the late President, but simply to indicate that for all who worthily bear the name "American" this is indeed a time of sorrow. Not only so, but as Chairman Kruschov has said, all who desire peace are the poorer... or as Adlai Stevenson has it, Those who love peace, justice and freedom have lost a champion.~~ *show this sorrow.*

In the face of the magnitude of this tragedy, wherein lies our cause for thanksgiving?

- 1) Mr. Kennedy met almost instant death... how thankful we should be that there was no long or crucial pain for him to endure, at least consciously.
- 2) Our system of government which was established on religious foundations under the hand of God, is still sufficiently strong to withstand a tragic blow... This is not true of some government God still has a hand in the destinies of men and nations. To be sure there have been many times when we have strayed from the paths intended by our founding fathers, but our republic remains as a last great hope <sup>AMONG HUMAN INSTITUTIONS</sup> for the preservation of the personal rights of God's children.  
**A cause for thanksgiving.**
- 3) There are many things that happen in life for which we find no easy answer. Experiences which we cannot understand baffle us. There seems to be no reason or purpose in what has happened. In the dark hour of a great loss, sick with despair and anguish, the hearts of millions cry out for an explanation. ~~The untimely death of our President has accentuated the perennial question about the death of one whose prime had scarce been reached, "Why should the brilliant, the purposeful, the zestful be snatched away?"~~ We need to remember that our Lord was only 33 when he died on the cross. Yet he said, "I have finished the work thou hast given me to do..." Indeed could the life of Christ have been more complete had he lived to be a hundred? We have reason for thanksgiving in a rediscovery of the truth that life as God has ordained it is not to be measured in terms of quantity, but of quality, not in terms of length, but of purpose. The physical passing of President Kennedy does not mean that the ideals and purposes for which he lived and died are now forever lost... It could mean that his sacrifice for these worthy ideals will speed the day of their fulfillment. In any case, we can be thankful that his life, or the life of any one of us can be complete if indeed it has been worthily lived, regardless of the hour of its physical cessation.
- 4) ~~I would dare to hope that this worthy sacrifice would stay the growing forces of hate and lawlessness in our country. Too often of late have we seen those, even in high places, who have undertaken to defy the law of the land when that law has run counter to their own opinion or conviction... Perhaps we will find reason for thanksgiving, if this terrible event serves to channel opposition and disagreement through the peaceful and legitimate recourses which our Constitution guarantees. If his death helps to quell violence and open defiance of law and order, then we will have reason for Thanksgiving.~~

5) Finally, we must be reminded that whatever the tragedy that befalls us individually or collectively, GOD IS. And the great purpose of His creation will continue in spite of all that evil men can do to thwart it. We can still be thankful for the normal and natural blessings (which are the original reason for the Day), we can be thankful that God has not dealt with us according to our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities, we can give thanks <sup>THAT</sup> to whatever degree there has been meaning and purpose in life, there is still meaning and purpose. We can yet be thankful that God has made us (each of us) for himself, and that he shall not rest (nor shall we) so long as there remains the possibility of reconciliation.

LET US PRAY: Grant us even now, O Lord, a knowledge of Thy presence, and the assurance of thy promise that all things work for the ultimate good of those who are thine. AMEN

Hear our prayer, O Lord, and give ear to our cry, as we lay before <sup>TREE</sup> the deep concern of our hearts. Thou knowest us better than we know ourselves. Thou knowest the sorrow that hast befallen us, and Thou art aware of the grief which hast assailed us. We look to Thee for the healing of hearts which are wounded by grief and broken in sorrow.

O Lord, Thou art our refuge in all generations and in Thy presence we find our only real security. Through this affliction draw the hearts of Thy children closer to Thee in love. May our sorrow serve as a discipline to train our eyes more steadfastly upon Thee who art Lord over all. Even as our joy is turned into sorrow, so art Thou able to turn our sorrow into joy, as we again receive Thy Divine assurance of the eternal destiny which Thou hast prepared for the faithful. May we hear again the promise of life eternal given us by our Saviour and Redeemer: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

O God, we thank Thee for the precious heritage of our Christian faith. Through it our troubled hearts find rest, even in time of sorrow. In the solemn earnestness of this hour, help us to consecrate our lives more fully to Thee so that we may live more bravely, follow Thee more closely, and love Thee more faithfully.

Out of the tragedy that hast befallen our beloved country and the free world, wilt Thou fashion a pattern of redemption for human need. May this terrible evil be made to work for the good of all men of good-will.... in the Name of Christ, AMEN