

**Funeral Homily**  
**Margret “Peggy” Smith**  
*Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Church*  
*Roseland, New Jersey*  
*July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014*

**Rev. Frank J. McNulty**

Jesus wept! He wept and His tears were just as real and salty as yours. Those ugly painful feelings making you want to cry. This past week we were part of His human experience. Prayer comes from deep within and springs to the surface. Maybe our tears are the best kind of worship of all. Is it any wonder that over the years I would see people in those pews letting their eyes drift up to that striking crucifix above us. The sadness is so total, so profound, so awful that it's hard to find the words to describe it.

Jesuit spirituality makes a try. Reminds us that life can be both sorrow and joy. The sorrow part they call desolation, but this approach always reminds us that there is consolation as well. I like those words, but I like an image better. I like a pearl in the rubbish. We dip our hands into that dreadful filthy garbage --- those sad feelings, but find a pearl. “Hey look everyone...Found a pearl. Never expected that but maybe there are even some more. A pearl: love.”

Father Andy Costello, a poet, has a poem called *Love and Death*. “Let's face it. Let's cliché it. Everybody knows it. The two major issues of life are Love and Death. The plot of every movie and novel, the story of everyone's life. You can have one without the other, but when you do, it's hell. [Imagine walking along the cold icy floor of death without love.] That is not the story here this morning. Peggy leaves a legacy...a legacy...of Love. She and Leon taught all of you not by lectures but by showing you how. If we lined all the children and grandchildren and brought them to the front steps for a picture and looked for a title, we would simply write “Love”. What a great pearl.

The day Leon and Peggy voiced their vows the priest probably said a Blessing we often used: “May you see your children's children and the love you lavish on them be returned a hundredfold.” I like that word: lavish...means going overboard. The blessing became a prophesy. Peggy left this life knowing, absolutely knowing, she was loved...by Leon and you...returned a hundredfold.

There was another blessing that became a prophesy: “May you have true friends to stand by in joy and in sorrow. And may you be ready with help and consolation for people who come to you in need.” I'm glad the Newark Clinic was mentioned. Love should not be hoarded...you spread it far and wide. A pearl: friends not just adults. The obit used the words “mayhem that ensued raising give children.” One of the daughters explained: all the varied friends of five kids came by first on bikes, but later in cars. I think Peg may have been the unofficial Youth Minister in Upper Montclair and Essex Fells. Probably served more food than the Caldwell Diner.

The obit also mentioned that Peg managed Leon's office. Interestingly how that was added to her Job Description. A friend told her of an overheard conversation at a beauty parlor. One woman recommended Doctor Smith to another, not because of his brilliant mind or skills in diagnoses, but because he usually forgot to send a bill. Next day a new Office Manager showed up. Name? Peggy Smith.

We mark Peg's death today, but celebrate her life. Celebrate is the right word. Sister Thea Bowman, a well known speaker, often quoted spirituals in an interview before cancer took her life. She said, "I've done my work, I've sang my song, and now I go where I belong. The Lord has willed it so." Ecclesiastes: "For everything there is a season, a time to break down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance."

Another pearl! Her very life. It was a happy one—success! Not too many valedictorians walking around, nursing, an adoring husband...and what were those words in The Ledger: "tall, elegant, beautiful and fun". One of you called her witty; the later years—grace and courage. At Pals or The Club people were always happy to see her. Egyptians think that salutation depends on giving joy and receiving joy. I want you Grandchildren to think of something you might not realize. You brought her lots and lots of joy. Remember that when you think of her. In fact, remember all kinds of things. Memories can be consoling. Don't zero in on these last few years. Remember earlier days...birthdays, graduations, hearty laughter, skilled cooking, presents, time around the table.

The hymn goes: We Remember, We Celebrate, We Believe. We believe what she did. That this is not the end...for us Life is changed, not ended. Another friend was dying a few years ago...big family...Jane had some inside jokes with her daughters. One was "Don't leave the party early, people will talk about you." She said one day: Well I guess I'll be leaving early, She mentioned that to her kindly Doctor...he said: "No, you will be the first to get to the party." Soon we will return to the Altar and continue Eucharist. In mysterious fashion the life, death and resurrection of Peggy will touch the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Eucharist is a prayer of thanks. Let's all thank God for Peggy—her brilliant mind, her pleasant personality, her mother instincts, her common sense, her strong faith, ready smile—but especially we thank God for putting this special woman in our lives.

What comes next? We need to mourn and this can be difficult. We know she died, what we need to get used to is her absence. We were bringing my Mom to the cemetery in a hearse. I was riding with the driver, conversing with him. A little old lady saw us, blessed herself and said a prayer. That was my first moment in realizing her absence...this is my mother we will put in the ground...never see her again...It took time, but eventually we learned to live without her.

If Peg could stand in this pulpit what do you think she would say? I like to consult women theologians, so I checked out Erma Bombeck when she was asked what she would do if she could live her life over again. Among other things she said seize every moment, live it, really live it, and never give it back. Peg would say some other things, and then hear my guess: "Miss me, remember me, speak of me, but please don't die with me. Live your life to the full like I tried to do."