

Homily for the Funeral of Marion Wassum

‘For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again.’

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Marion Wassum, whom we gather together this day to bless, passed unto hands of our Lord at a certain age. I do not know what that age was; nor do I think anyone here with any specificity, for it was her custom to divulge her age to no one, not even to the Church records, which have her birth date merely as “the 1900’s”.

It is said that it is rude to ask a woman her age. If it is rude to ask a woman her age, I do not know why it is any more proper for a woman to give her age. And if there is any word that defines our sister Marion, it is the word ‘proper.’

Marion did everything properly. I, as her pastor, was often not able to visit her because she did not look ‘proper’. And when I was able to visit her, she was proper indeed.

The word proper simply means ‘having what is one’s own.’ It is proper to thank a clerk after check out, for they should have that. It is proper to bring wine to a dinner party, for the host deserves that much. It is proper to dress in good clothes for a funeral, for the dignity of the passed rightly demands that. From this word we derive the term ‘property’, that which one owns.

Now it is written: *‘For death came by a man.’* Indeed, by the sin of Adam, death became the property of us all, and to die eternally is proper to us all. We deserve it, we demand it; indeed, we already have it.

For this reason, *we number our days.*

We count our years. We know our age. We track our age because we know that that number eventually ends. For man *‘flees*

like a shadow and continues not.' Because of our sin, we are mortal, and mortality puts a limit to our life, a limit that, with every birthday, we draw closer to. For this reason, we remember our age; not so much as a celebration, but as a clock, to see how much closer we have drawn toward death. For again, to die eternally is proper to us all. In the truest sense, as sinners, we own death, and death owns us.

Yet Marion never told her age, she never *numbered her days*. And why should she? She was truly proper. She knew what was hers, what she owned; and she owned not death, for she owned Christ, and by Christ *has come also the resurrection of all flesh*.

For it is written: *'For Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet, and the last enemy that He shall destroy is death.'*

Indeed, death has Our Lord destroyed. By His cross has He abolished all account of sin to all who believe in Him. By His descent into Hell He has struck down the evil one *with all of his works and all of his ways*. By His resurrection from the dead, He abolished death, and by His ascension into heaven, He has granted passage to all who have been baptized unto the unending light, the vision of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is this baptism which Marion was given. And having been given it, it is this baptism which Marion owned, for it was proper to her, and being a proper woman, she never let it go.

What then has she owned in her baptism? Now she has owned the forgiveness of sin, and embraced eternal innocence. Now she has owned the end of death, and embraced eternal life. Now she has owned the final resurrection, and has embraced the beatific vision, for now she sees Christ as He is, for she sees Him face to face.

She never counted her years, for that is a habit of mortals, who believe their years come to an end. But to one who has embraced eternity, to the immortal,

there is no counting of years; there is no reason; for they have entered into the *world without end*.

We mourn this day, for it seems to us, in our weakness, that a *tree has been cut down*. Yet Christ asks of us three virtues: *faith, hope, and love*. Therefore, we who have faith, and know love; let us then *hope*, and not in vain, knowing with surety, that the *tree cut down, shall sprout again, and its shoots will not cease*.

For this is promised us by our Good Shepherd; and we, like Marion, are His sheep. And He has spoken to His flock: ‘My *sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.*’

Wait, then, you who mourn. For where Marion is, *you shall be also*. You have been baptized into eternity. For it is only proper. Be patient, for *man is few of days, he comes out like a flower and withers, he flees like a shadow*. And when his earthly days end, He shall bear the waters of Christ’s baptism before the heavenly throne, and with all the faithful cry out:

‘*Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*’

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Psalm

23, Job 14:1-17; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26; John 10:27-30.