

St. Luke Funeral of Michelle Hoffmaster February 2, 2008

Matthew 5:14-16

Today we know that Michelle is resting in the arms of God. The Lord that she loved and trusted in so much in this life - that same Lord, Jesus has taken her home to be with Him, forever.

But for those of us who remain, this is a day of deep sorrow. Someone whom we love has been torn from our lives. Torn from our lives by an illness that we could not control - and that she could not control.

Michelle had many gifts. She was caring. She was very intelligent and bright. She was very giving - even as a child she would sacrifice to give to an international children's fund. Even in death, she was an organ donor - blessing up to 100 other people with new life and new sight. And Michelle was very dedicated and faithful to the Church - and to her Lord Jesus Christ. She wanted nothing more than to bring peace and unity to the church.

But if you knew Michelle, you know that she could be stubborn. Once she got something into her head - she was going to do that thing no matter what. I remember trying to talk her out of taking 25 college credits this semester. Not a chance.

Now, we on the outside would see that as stubbornness - and yet it was actually a part of her illness. Her mind had a way of focusing on a problem to the exclusion of everything else - to the exclusion of **anyone** else. Michelle was never able to have peace in this world, because her mind would always be racing at 100 miles per hour. And nothing that anyone else said, could ease her mind or give her a different perspective.

That is what is so frustrating for those of us who are left behind. Michelle was surrounded by so many people who loved her and only wanted the best for her. So many people who were pulling for her - praying for her. And yet, in the end, her illness overwhelmed her - too many problems compounded and could not be reasoned out, and there was no way that anyone could get behind her walls to bring peace. Nothing that anyone could say or do could save her.

And so, finally we are here. With deep sorrow and loss, we mourn for our sister Michelle. We have no easy answers as to why such painful tragedies happen.

And yet, this loss - this separation is not the end. Death is not the end - for Michelle or for us. There is One who has faced Death before - and won. Our Lord Jesus faced death and has destroyed death. Indeed, for us, Jesus has transformed the unknown path of Death - Jesus has

transformed Death into a passageway, a gateway to eternal life.

And the Lord that Michelle loved and trusted in - our Lord Jesus Christ has taken His child, Michelle to be with Him in His heavenly Kingdom. To care for her and to heal her, in a way that we could not. In the end, Jesus has rescued Michelle from this painful life - and has given her that peace, that eternal peace that only He can give. Michelle is free from all the pain and anguish that she felt in this life.

But even now - even though Michelle has gone to dwell in that land of eternal light and eternal peace. I believe that there is a part of us that will remain connected with her forever. I believe that there is a part of us that will remain connected with Michelle wherever she has gone to be in that other life. In I Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul writes, "And now, faith, hope, and love abide (that is, that they remain forever). Faith, hope, and love abide. But the greatest of these is love." God's eternal love.

And the love that each of you have for Michelle - is a love that comes from God. That love remains forever. It is eternal. And I believe that that love, connects each of us with Michelle, forever. Forever. Until we see her

again in that glorious Kingdom of Heaven - where there is no mourning, nor crying, nor pain - and death is no more.

May our sister Michelle dwell in God's eternal light and God's eternal peace, forever.

Amen