Funeral
Mr. George Waldner - Jan. 1958

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

2 Timothy 4: 7,8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

Our beloved brother, Mr. Waldner, has fought a godd fight, finished his course in this fleeting world of human existence, kept the faith of confident trust in the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, his Savior -- and now he has entered the "winners' circle" to receive the crown of righteousness in the unspeakable glory of unending bliss in heaven. As we contemplate his leaving us, think about how much he meant to us, remember all the wonderful things he did for us; our hearts are filled to over-flowing with genuine grief. We weep and mourn just because we loved him, just because he meant so much to us, just because he was such a devout Christian and diligent worker in Christ's Church. But our tears are not tears that have no hope; our grief is not subject to despair -- for Mr. Waldner was a Christian. We know that our God cares about us and stands ever-ready to receive us into His gracious arms and comfort us with an everlasting comfort. Yea, He cared so much that He sacrificed His only Son on the altar of Calvary's cross to rescue us from despair and the curse of hell. Take comfort in this: God knows what it is to die! God knows what it is to lose a beloved friend! There is probably nothing which illustrates the concern and understanding of our God for the loss of a loved one better than to see Jesus, the very Son of the Most High, standing over the grave of Lazarus crying. St. John records this heart-rending scene: Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! But even as Jesus by His Mighty Word raised Lazarus from the dead -- so we can all rejoice that on the Last Day He shall by the same Almighty Word call us all forth from the grave and take us to Himself in the mansions of paradise. St. John seeing a vision of this unspeakable, indescribable glory, declares: And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;

and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

And so now, in conformity with pious custom, as we gather around the casket of our departed brother, to hold a brief service over him -- with out ostentation, for he distained all outward show, and without eulogy, for he was never in favor of eulogy -- yet in true characterization of his spiritual life, there is perhaps no text of God's Word more applicable than that just read from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness

When St. Paul speaks of the faith he means a distinct and definite faith, the faith which he had once embraced when smitten low on the road to Damascus, the faith by which the blessings of the Gospel had flowed into his soul, the faith in the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, the faith in the blessed Redeemer Who had purchased and won him -- and all of us -- from sin, death, and the power of the devil, the faith in the Divine Sanctifier Who had called him by the Gospel, enlightened him with His gifts, sanctified and kept him in the true faith -- the faith revealed to him and to all in God sure Word of truth, the Bible. It was this selfsame faith which the deceased had embraced. Oh, how he appreciated it! Sunday after Sunday found him in God's house worshipping this God of his salvation! Again and again he would testify to the faith to fellow Christians and to those outside the Church in order to win them to this sustaining, God-given hope. Time after time found him kneeling at the altar to partake of the blessed Sacrament of his Redeemer's own body and blood to receive the assurance that his sins -- every one of them -- were indeed forgiven, removed forever.

Yes, he could say, I have fought a good fight! That is what Christian life is; it is a perpetual warfare and strife and struggle with the evil that is within us, a conflict with the influences and temptations of the wicked forces around us, and with the ills and trials and anxieties of this life. It is not an

easy matter to keep the faith. We are constantly in danger of being drawn aside from the paths of righteousness. But continually filling himself with the power and might and strength of the Holy Spirit, Mr Waldner could say, I have fought a good fight, with the help of God I have overcome and obtained the victory.

Throughout his life he clung to this assured promise: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day. Already in Holy Baptism, the crown was laid up for him. That crown he looked forward to. What sort of a crown? A crown of righteousness! Whose righteousness? His own? Certainly not. As a faithful follower of Christ, he knew that it was the righteousness of his Lord which would avail for him. But a few moments before his death he confessed: I believe that Jesus Christ etc.

And do now, in spirit we can see him, before God's white throne, receiving that crown amid the praises of the angel choir and hear the Master's words of commendation addressed to him; Come, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord. Yes, his is a favored lot, a marvelous heritage. He kept the faith!

And if his lips could again speak to us in a final word of farewell, would he not once again give us the exhortation of our text? Keep the faith! That was the stength of my heart, the inspiration and motive power of my life while I was here on this earth! Trusting in my Savior, I have entered upon glory. Keep the faith, my dear relatives and friends! Hold fast to what God has so bountifully blessed you with in spiritual matters, so that in but a little while we can again rejoice together in a most happy reunion before the throne of our God.