Funeral Sermon
Mrs. Anton Wirtz - September 18, 1963
Rolling Meadows

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Jeremiah 31: 3 I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;
Come to the Mercy Seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrow that Heav'n cannot heal.

It is truly a great and comforting thing to be able to stand at the casket of a devout, Christian believer - and to know that this is not the final note end, but only the beginning - the beginning of life in all of its fullness and glory - the beginning of life as God Himself originally intended it to be - free from the taint of sin, free from the anguish, and grief, and heartache, and sorrow that marks our world. For our loved one in Christ This is the beginning of life - REAL LIFE - in the very presence of God, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. We don't have to guess at this. God Himself has made it true. God has made it true in the gift of His own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, the Holy One of God lived His life for us. Christ died for us because we had sinned & fallen short of the glory of God ~~and for our sins~~. Christ arose from the dead that in them we might live forever. You must never doubt the grace of God in Christ Jesus. You must never weaken in your faith about the new life -- it is not only the assurance that all our sins are forgiven, but that He who forgave them by His death on the Cross now lives eternally - and we shall live with Him. Like the clear call of the trumpet, it rises in the Creed: On the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He lives - and another - strong to save & His Word rings out across the world: Because I live, ye shall live also..... I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and shosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.....Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. With this Word of Christ a whole new world begins. Bodies moldering away in the grave will rise again in the likeness of His glorified body. Once more there is hope for our fear-filled and grief-stricken world. Once more there is the (blessed assurance gift) of the glory and the love of God. And we can say it right along with the

apostles: Death is swallowed up in victory. Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave where is thy victory? .... Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Gravestones and graves hold no terror now. Christ hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. ..... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? God is not dead. Christ lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is the faith and the confidence which your loved one had. Surely today our eyes are wet with tears. We weep just because we loved her and just because we will miss her. But our hearts must also rejoice because God loved her and because even now she is with her Savior in all of the unspeakable glories of heaven. Like a great benediction there stands over her life these words of the Almighty: I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. From eternity God loved her and wanted her always to be His very own. Through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism God established His everlasting covenant of love with her, drawing her into His Kingdom of Grace. As she grew into womanhood the Lord continued to nourish and strengthen her faith and trust in the redeeming, saving Cross of her Redeemer. Then in the course of time God gave her a devout, Christian husband. Together you worshiped, and prayed, and had your devotions. God blessed you with good health and happy days. He permitted you to travel - where you beheld the beauty and greatness of His creation all over the world - the majesty of the mountains and green valleys, the glory of the lakes and wooded forests. And all the while you knew that there were even greater and better things to come. You knew that you were only strangers and pilgrims on this earth - that you had here no continuing city - that nothing in this world could begin to compare with the glory which God has prepared for those who love him.

Now in His loving-kindness God has permitted her to take that great and glorious journey home to Himself. God's love for her was evident in her death. One moment she was serving the Lord with her life here on earth - then she was

standing at her Savior's side forever to live for Him in eternity. There were no long, lingering months of suffering and pain. Like Enoch of old, she walked with God, and was not, for God took her. Yet, God in His great love, did give her time for final preparations. Only last Friday she had Communion with her Lord - the surety of His body broken and His blood shed - the assurance of his love and the peace of His forgiveness. Here it is - My Body, given FOR YOU....My Blood, shed FOR YOU for the remission of sins... Depart in peace.

On and up goes the soul of our beloved to be with Christ in the Mansions of Paradise For her the greatest of life's journeys has been completed. As we look after her from this side of the grave, we cannot begin to comprehend the greatness of the glory which is now hers. Moses spent forty days and nights on the Mount of God; and before he came back down, he prayed: Lord God, show me Thy glory. He was permitted only a trailing glimpse of God's glory; but when he came down from the Mount his face shown so brightly that the people could not bear to look at him and he had to cover his face with a vail. St. John, in his vision of heaven, caught a glimpse of the saints and martyrs standing before the throne of the Lame who was slain for our sins, and he shouted: Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth - Immediately - yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them. Shortly before His crucifixion Jesus took Peter, James and John to the top of the holy mount where He was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun; and His raiment was white as light. They saw their Lord in all the fullness of His glory - a glory which He had with His Father before the world began. Moses and Elijah were there too, and the disciples recongized them and talked with them. Enraptured, they cried: Lord, it is good for us to be here. The Apostle Paul was given a glimpse of this glory, and he cried: I have a desire to depart (to die) and to be with Christ, which is far better..... To die is gain.

This is the glory that now belongs to your loved one. Surely we must praise God who has loved her with an everlasting love and with loving kindness has drawn her to Himself. Soon, it will not be very long, only a little while, and

we too shall pass from death unto life. And we shall be reunited with our loved one under the shadow of our Redeemer's love. What a great and glorious day that will be - what a day that will be. Wherefore comfort one another with these words

Amen.