FUNERAL -- PAUL TAMAS - June 24, 1994

IN NOMINE JESU

REVELATION 1: 17,18 WHEN I SAW HIM, I FELL AT HIS FEET AS THOUGH DEAD. BUT HE PLACED HIS RIGHT HAND ON ME, SAYING, "DO NOT BE AFRAID; I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST AND THE LIVING ONE. I WAS DEAD, AND SEE, I AM ALIVE FOREVER AND EVER; AND I HAVE THE KEYS OF DEATH AND OF HADES!"

Several times I found myself standing at Paul's bedside -- just standing there an STRUGGLING with my own THOUGHTS and PRAYERS and MEDITATIONS -- WATCHING HIM with the CRY IN MY HEART: O GOD, HE IS STILL SUCH A YOUNG MAN -- TE STROKE HAS BEEN SO MASSIVE -- SO CRIPPLING! What do I pray for? "IF FOR THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPED IN CHRIST, WE ARE OF ALL PEOPLE MOST TO BE PITIED!" O GOD, EHLP US, HELP US ALL TO HOLD ON TO YOUR PROMISES -- YOUR PROMISE that"THIS PERISHABLE BODY MUST PUT ON IMPERISHABILITY, AND THIS MORTAL BODY MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY."

Last Monday I again stood by his bed. I reached down and I grabbed his hand, and I said, "PAUL, THIS IS PASTOR THRUN FROM HOLY CROSS. I HAVE COME TO PRAY WITH YOU." I continued to hold his HAND and I began praying the first part of PSALM 46, the PSALM where Martin Luther got his inspiritation for "A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD, A TRUSTY SHIELD AND WEAPON!" We prayed, "O LORD JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, ALWAYS A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TIME OF TROUBLE. THEREFORE WE WILL NOT FEAR, THOUGH THE EARTH BE REMOVED AND THE MOUNTAINS BE CARRIED INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA. FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING YOU ARE GOD! COME TO ME NOW IN THE MIDST OF MY SUFFERING AND PAIN! LORD, YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS TO SUFFER! GIVE ME THE ASSURANCE OF YOUR NEVER-FAILING PRESENCE -- THE PROMISE THAT EVERYTHING REALLY DOES HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER FOR MY GOOD BECAUSE I AM YOUR CHILD. LORD JESUS, HOLD ME SAFE AND SECURE IN YOUR EVERLASTING ARMS! INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MYSELF, MY BODY AND SOUL AND ALL THINGS. LET YOU HOLY ANGELS WATCH OVER ME THAT THE WICKED ONE HAVE NO POWER OVER ME." .....Paul's eyes moved in recognition of my presence!

Saundy, Holly, Kevin, Kathy, Irene (I'm sure you talked about this and prayed about this long before you came into my office last Wednesday. As hard as it is to LET GO, I want you to know how much I personally COMMEND you for your UNSELFISH ATTITUDE. You told me about YOUR PRAYERS that GOD WOULD GIVE HIM RELEASE and TAKE HIM HOME so that he would not have to go to a NURSING HOME. This, after all, is our CHRISTIAN FAITH! We have here NO CONTINUING CITY, BUT WE SEEK ONE THAT IS TO COME, WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD." And this is what ST. JOHN, THE SEER, is talking about in the Book of Revelation. It is not hard for me to VISUALIZE that ANGELS carrying PAUL Home where Paul sees

JESUS FACE-TO- FACE. And I can visualize Paul falling at His feet and Jesus "PUTTING HIS RIGHT HAND ON HIM, SAYING, 'HI! I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST AND THE LIVING ONE. I AM JESUS, YOUR SAVIOR! I WAS DEAD TOO, AND SEE, I AM ALIVE FOREVER AND EVER; AND I HAVE THE KEYS OF DEATH AND HADES!"....."COME, YOU BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.".....And off they go -- hand-in-hand, arm-in-arm.

Into the DARKNESS OF DEATH comes now the NEW DAWN of LIFE AND RESURRECTION: "BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU SHALL LIVE ALSO!" SIN HAS LOST ITS STING! THE GRAVE HAS LOST ITS POWER! "CHRST HAS ABOLISHED DEATH AND HAS BROUGHT LIFE AND IMMORTALITY TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL!" - "EYE HAS NOT SEEN NOR EAR HEARD THE THINGS THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM!"..... GOD ALWAYS REACHING OUT TO US! -- GOD ALWAYS GIVING -- CREATING OUT OF NOTHING -- FILLING OUR EMPTINESS -- BRINGING LIFE OUT OF DEATH! "DO NOT BE AFRAID! I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST AND THE LIVING ONE. I WAS DEAD, AND SEE, I AM ALIVE FOREVERMORE; AND I HAVE THE KEYS OF DEATH AND HADES!."

So our prayers continue to Him who SITS ON THE THRONE -- to HIM WHO LOVES US WITH AND EVERLASTING LOVE!" Out of the Depths we cry out to Him: "O LORD, HOLD EACH OF US SAFE AND SECURE IN YOUR EVERLASTING ARMS! BRING US HOME --TO THAT HOLY CITY - WHERE WITH PAUL AND THE ANGELS AND ARCHANGELS AND ALL THE REST OF THE COMPANY OF HEAVEN WE WILL JOIN THEIR ETERNAL ALLELUIAS TO THE PRAISE OF YOUR GLORIOUS NAME.