

“A perfect wife: who can find her? Treasure a wise and good wife: her gracious presence is worth more than gold.”

When we first hear of the death of someone as precious and as much loved as Sadie, we feel a sense of despoilment: the world has lost someone who fitted her place like a precious stone perfectly set. There is something harmonious and gracious about her, and we feel that a heavy and senseless destruction has happened which has made us all poor. What it is like for her husband is beyond our imagining, and our sympathy goes out to all the family. They are well-placed to comfort each other, and that is only the beginning of the blessings that will flow from this time of sorrow.

Tonight we are meeting to sustain the work of remembrance, treasuring the memory of those who have died. There is something especially poignant about this Mass, where so many of us are actively involved in the work of curing and healing, because we meet together as mourners, and this year at an especially trenchant moment of grief.

The first half of the Mass is the receiving of the Word of God, that sacramental gift which can reach into our minds and hearts. We need to enter that place where God can speak to us; we need his single and humanly inexpressible word to be translated for us into human sense and sentences; but for all that it is the realisation of the eternal word, who is beyond our small resources, that we most need. It's because we can't encompass God, that we can surrender ourselves to him and find rest in him, as a little child surrenders herself into the care of her parents, and sleeps safely because she trusts and knows them without the need to understand.

In this way the shock of bereavement, and the steady faithfulness of mourning have a meaning far beyond themselves. This agony is the experience of being stretched, and made greater, and we must be made great enough to receive the love of God, which is beyond the scale of our human hearts.

In this way the loss of our earthly communion sets us searching for the communion of the saints: the tide of our defeated emotions cleanses us for the pure longing which waits for God to come. And the Church comes to help us in this moment of testing, assuring us that the departed are safe in the hand of God, that it is we who are being changed, under the terrific surgery which makes us sound pilgrims, seeking with a greater love for the eternal home for which we are made.

So our treasuring of the loved ones we have lost is not a sad earthbound licking of wounds. It is suffused with the promises of Christ, it is lit from within by the one who spoke of his death as a glorification. The change which we so dread is awesome because it accomplishes so much; it is our call to tread the marches between our poor humanity, and the glory of God.

Let us enter into this holy place with confidence, and be ready for the breaking of the bread, the faithful acceptance of the hard task of living in grief. We shall know him, not only by his word on the road, but in the breaking of the bread of this evening meal.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them. May they rest in peace.