

Homily for Bro. Clarence Chew, SM
By Fr. Stephen Tutas

I believe the great readings we have just heard
faithfully reflect features of Brother Clarence's life –
and remind us that Clarence was above all a man of simple and great faith.

May our reflection on these readings this evening help all of us grow in faith.

First of all, the passage from the Book of Wisdom challenges us
to look beyond appearances to reality, a reality known only by faith.

We all know that Brother Clarence
faithfully attended many funerals of alumni and friends.

The passage from the Book of Wisdom is used frequently
for masses of Christian Burial for teachers
for it contains that remarkable tribute:

“Great will be their blessings....they will shine out...like sparks in stubble!”

But the reading begins with a challenge to our faith.
Yesterday the body of Clarence was reduced to ashes.
It was an apparent annihilation.

Our faith, however, tells us that death is not the end of life;
rather it is actually the beginning of new life.

In a real sense, Clarence will some day, some how, rise from these ashes.

In the wonderful words of the Preface which we will say
at the beginning of our Eucharistic prayer this evening:

“Lord, for your faithful, life is changed, not ended.”

We know that Clarence suffered greatly in his last weeks of life.

Knowing his faith we also realize
that he certainly tried to make a “sacrificial offering”

of those last days of helplessness and dependence.

It was the last great test of his life
and we are confident that God accepted Clarence's offering of himself.

We truly believe that Clarence is in God's loving hands,
free from torment, in peace.

And we celebrate our great hope that Clarence will live with God forever.
As the author of the Book of Wisdom declares:

"The souls of the just are in the hand of God; they are in peace."

In our second reading, we find Saint Paul's great act of faith
in his declaration to the Corinthians
that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus...

These words remind us that we are all called to share
in the passion, death – and resurrection of Jesus.

I also found the next words of Paul quite appropriate to Clarence's life.

Paul said, "We believe, therefore we speak."

Our faith is a great gift which we are called to express and to share.
And we express our faith not only in words, but above all in action.

Last week we had a memorial service in Cupertino for Brother Clarence and as we shared reflections on Clarence's life, Father John Bolin reminded us that in all public gatherings Brother Clarence always wore a badge identifying himself as a Marianist. It was a way for Clarence to express his faith and his commitment. Many times in recent years I was a guest of the Marianist Hall community. On Wednesdays the community has the custom of sharing reflections on the Scripture Readings of the day. Clarence always prepared carefully for this event – and he often made it a memorable event as he shared with us some very personal experiences.

I don't know how often I have heard his story of his survival of the bombing of Pearl Harbor while riding on a bus. I believe that all his life he saw this as a sign of God's providence, and he realized that if his life had been spared, it was because God had some special work for him to do. Those are not his words or mine – rather they are words of the great Cardinal Newman who said: *God has some special work for each of us to do that no one else can do!*

Clarence's uniqueness is legendary.

He was transparently simple, yet complex, enriched by many experiences. The list of community assignments includes service not only in California and Hawaii but also in Japan and Korea. Among other things, Clarence was most devoted in keeping in touch with all of us who made our first profession of vows in the Society of Mary in 1944. He was the faithful correspondent who kept us in touch with one another.

He also had the custom of sharing his experiences, especially his journeys. It was his way of sharing some of the special gifts that he had received. In all this what always struck me was his sense of wonder.

The special work that Clarence did was one that we like to think is characteristic of every Marianist: hospitality. But it was not only the welcome Clarence gave to guests, it was the way he quietly reached out to keep in touch with the elderly I remember well his kindness to Laura Carter and Anne Cummingsmith.

Finally, a word about the Gospel where we hear Jesus Himself proclaim *I am the resurrection, and the life: the one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live.* And then Jesus challenged Martha: *"Do you believe this?"* Her response challenges all of us this evening *"I do believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God."*

As we continue this celebration of faith, may each of us be inspired to make that same act of faith that we are in Christ's presence now and that because of this faith in Christ we shall live forever.

May Clarence be one of those faithful *"for whom life is changed, not ended"* and live with God forever!

Stephen Tutas, SM, August 1, 2007, Honolulu