

Homily
The Funeral Mass for Sister Charlene Wedelich, CDP
Main Chapel, Conventual Chapel, OLLU
July, 16, 2020

1. Thank you, Sister Pearl, and all of the members of the Congregation for permitting me to preside at this funeral Mass today. My association with the CDP's, as you know, goes back to when this 9 year old fourth grader showed up at St. Mary's Catholic School in Fredericksburg, having moved from upstate New York. Each and all of my encounters with you have been encounters with Christ. We give thanks to God for all your members, past and present and future. The love of God and of God's people that flow from this community is the model for us all.
2. We also bless and welcome all of the Sr. Charlene's extended family who were able to be here today. We are grateful for your love and care for Sr. during all of these years, and your tremendous support of her vocation in Divine Providence.
3. Welcome Father David Garcia, and any other priests who arrive.
4. Sister Pearl will offer a eulogy later in the service which will describe the life of faith, prayerful service to the Church and the Congregation, friendship, and advocacy for justice that Sr. Charlene has lived in thankful and joyful response to her delightful and challenging relationship with God that leads to the joy and deep satisfaction that we have all experienced in our relationships with Sr. Charlene. What Sr. Pearl will speak, we have witnessed. And it flows from that which this liturgy and this Word of God proclaimed.
5. It is such a gift that Sr. Charlene and the community have offered our readings today and particularly our Gospel, commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount or the Beatitudes. This discourse is NOT a list of instructions about what disciples are to do but rather is a description of the Christian spiritual life flowing from the transforming presence of

Christ within. Jesus did not merely TEACH the Beatitudes; He LIVED the Beatitudes. More than that actually, He IS the Beatitudes.

6. One can see Sr. Charlene and this Congregation and other believers resting in the grass as Jesus, presented as a Moses-like figure who went up the mountain, sat down as a respected Rabbi would, and taught His chosen ones what it is like to be HIM. Far from being a series of pithy sayings about Christian behavior, the Beatitudes are a revelation of the image of Christ. Thus, they summarize the transforming work of Christ's Spirit in us—establishing in every believer a new set of attitudes, a life of paradox, and a change of heart.
7. Jesus' proclamation of the Beatitudes was far more radical than we might think, as He took His place as the new Moses from the Mount. This teaching represents the concentrated memory of many hours of heart-to-heart communion between Jesus and His disciples, who gradually learned that they have to make new choices and consider a new way of living life if they were to follow this new Rabbi and His teaching.
8. The first word in each Beatitude is the Greek word *makarios*, usually, as it is here, translated as *blessed*. A good effort, but let me quote a few lines from William Barclay the great Protestant Scripture Scholar: "Makarios...describes that joy which has its secret within itself, that joy which is serene and untouchable, and self-contained, that joy which is completely independent of all the chances and the changes of life..." Consider these words, that spirit, when you remember and celebrate Sr. Charlene's person and ministry.
9. Jesus spoke of this eternal, unassailable joy when he told his disciples just before his death, "I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." (John 16:22) The Reign of God is promised those who follow Him. They will have the light of this life.
10. This deepest satisfaction, we are reminded, flows from our self-emptying poverty and dependence upon our Provident God; it flows

from entering fully and freely, and with purity of heart, into every relationship which seeks to lead us to God; it flows from a teachable, listening heart attentive to God's invitation to love God not only in worship, but in service to the broken and broken-hearted. You know them: poverty, chastity and obedience.

11. For Sr. Charlene, this unassailable joy began in the arms of her loving family who were, in love with the Lord Jesus and His Church. She was baptized as Patricia Ann and there met the Beloved as she was incorporated into the community of grace, by Grace Godself. This was to be a life-long love affair.

12. Her family would not merely bring their child into the Church sacramentally, but they saw to it that faith was nourished in family life and in Catholic education. The Sisters of Divine Providence, witnessed to her this deep satisfaction and freedom of heart in a Provident God. Patricia Ann was completely won over by their grace. Patricia Anne became Sr. Charlene as she entered vows and joined, with her whole being, this congregation of women religious who have wonderfully lifted up this region of the Church by their presence and generous gifts.

13. We have been touched by Sr. Charlene's gifts that are something of a legend in the community and in the Church. This extroverted leader never met a stranger. A real Pontifex, she built bridges connecting all groups as we embraced the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and the implications of those reforms for the religious life of consecrated women. As superior of this Congregation, she led us to also embrace more ministries of service beyond education for the benefit of the poor and underserved. As superior, she made many friendships, most notably our dear mentor and friend Msgr. Larry Stuebben, Archbishop Patricio Flores and Bishop John McCarthy, of happy memory, and Archbishop emeritus Joseph Fiorenza. These relationships would link closely the work of the Church in Texas.

14. As past superior of this Congregation and as Vicar of Consecrated Religious in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, she

facilitated greater participation of women religious in leadership and advocated for their well-being and formation. She offered to us an indomitable confidence in the future and a deep trust in a Provident God. This confianza was born in that spirit of discipleship described in the Beatitudes.

15. All of this relationship building in Christ would allow her to serve as one of three leaders who would organize the Papal Visit of now St. John Paul II to Texas. Those near her will attest to the positive, can-do spirit that was so often needed during that exciting yet challenging moment of our history. She made it clear that this event was a Pastoral Visit to announce further the salvation of all in Christ Jesus. It's faithfulness, and therefore, success, had much to do with Sr. Charlene's grace and presence.
16. Beatitude living has made Sr. Charlene salt and light for the world. Her inward transformation in Christ has been externally evident. She helped shape the world and the times in which she lived through the preserving and "flavoring" salt of her witness, and the light of her passionate love, which shone brightly so others who see that love may glorify, not her, but the Provident God revealed in her. This is the consequence and impact of becoming more like Christ, more fully "Beatitude people."
17. In the Beatitudes Jesus was not merely dreaming of a day to come. These are not pious hopes or nebulous prophecies of some future heavenly bliss. Jesus is declaring what the spiritual life IS for those who believe in Him. The makarios or blessedness of the disciple exists in the here and now. Sr Charlene's life witnessed to her faith that these things be true. Now, for Sr. Charlene her "future day" has arrived. That deep satisfaction and blessedness she knew has now reached another level of fullness and certainty as promised by the Provident God. God's Reign now embraces her as we once did each other. Thank you, Sr. Charlene. Thank you, Provident God.