

Saint Lawrence Church, Chestnut Hill
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Solemn Funeral Mass
For Philip Thomas Crotty, Jr.
June 19, 2019

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Most Reverend Father, Reverend Fathers, ladies and gentlemen of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, and ladies and gentlemen, everyone in this church this morning will tell you of the great esteem, affection, respect, and admiration he or she had for **Philip Crotty**. I had met **Phil** about twenty years ago, at St Aidan's Church in Brookline, and in the intervening years benefited much from his friendship. Over the years, after he had heard a sufficient number of my sermons, **Phil** had opportunity to choose *someone else* to preach at his obsequies! Several weeks before **Philip** died I learned he had asked that I should fill that spot. And I am honored more than I can say. Still every bit the teacher, **Phil** gave instruction: "I urge the homilist to stress the need for prayers and Mass for my soul and not to imply that I am already in Heaven." But I think he knew he was safe with his preacher! And at his funeral, as at every funeral Mass, we will offer prayers both of *supplication* and *thanksgiving*. *Supplication*: for all the times **Philip Crotty** fell short of God's will and intention for him. And he did fall short. We had to listen to his corny jokes! And *thanksgiving*: for the many times God's grace broke through and triumphed in the life of our great friend and colleague.

During Holy Week so many things are going on. We often take no notice of a bit of subterfuge involved as arrangements were made for the Last Supper. As described in St Mark's Gospel, those events have all the hallmarks of a Graham Greene novel. If you think of "*The Third Man*," and all the cloak and dagger stuff, you would be on the right track! Our Lord had been out of sight since Palm Sunday. And then He gave curious instructions to two disciples. They were to "follow a man carrying a pitcher of water, and when he enters a house, ask the good man of the house for a guest room. And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. There prepare for us."

Who was this good man of the house? He was not a casual acquaintance of the Lord Jesus. Far from it. From the evidence we have, both in the Lord's request and the man's response, *Jesus trusted him*. What a wonderful and rare epitaph that is! The Lord asked for *a small guest room*. (That is the one which goes unused much of the time. It easily becomes a glorified closet. It's the place you store porch

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furniture in winter months. The dresser is filled with your sweaters-in-moth-balls during the summer.) But this good man provided *the largest and best room*. That large and best room had probably already been furnished for his own Passover meal with his family. Jesus asked for *κατάλυμα* but received *ἀνάγαιον*. Those are the Greek words used, and they tell the difference. The good man was asked for the least and he gave the best; he was asked for the smallest and gave the largest.

This good man had learned a thing or two from His Master. He had come to know generosity is in the very nature of God Himself. Followers of Jesus are told to “walk the second mile.” Our Lord speaks of the “good measure of grain pressed down and running over” the measuring scale. When He turned water into wine at Cana, the pots were “filled to the brim,” and then it was noticed “the best wine was saved until now.” In all these ways Christ Jesus called for our generosity and love in response to His initiative. “We love, because He first loved us.” The good man of the house had risen to the occasion. *And it showed.*

The Catholic Church was founded in a large upper room furnished. It may have been the most important request Our Lord ever made. The upper room was our first assembly place, and it was made possible by the very best one man could give. And we don't even know his name. His response may have been a thank offering to Jesus for some grace or miracle-cure. But what is certain is the Church of Jesus Christ flourishes as there are good men and women responding generously to God's call. In Holy Week one man's room became the location of Heaven on earth. When the Master had a need, look what came from a response in generosity! “No, not the guest room for the Master; show them the *best* room in the house, the *large* one, the upper room, *well furnished.*”

Is there a price to pay for giving the best to the Lord? Of course there is! On short notice, the good man had to find somewhere else where he and his family could celebrate the Passover. There is a price to pay for you and me as well. Thank God there *is* a price to pay! If there were no price, it wouldn't be generosity! There was a price to pray for **Phil Crotty**. And he probably never considered any alternatives.

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If you had occasion to read **Philip Crotty's** obituary you may have noticed, among all his activities and achievements, that he had *twenty godchildren*. Not bad for a bachelor! Philip Crotty was an inspiration to many people. You don't need me to tell you that. What you may not know is that in his last days he never said a word. His old body was shutting down and sleeping most of the time. But the hospital staff noticed something. Among the visitors was a steady stream of priests coming up to pay their respects and say prayers. The faithful witness was still there. *And it showed.*

Philip Thomas Crotty Jr was a present-day reminder that the good man of the house still exists: to the benefit of Christ's Church, and an inspiration to the rest of us. May he rest in peace.