

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at a Solemn Requiem Mass  
For Winifred E. Payne  
September 28, 2019

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Today Christ's Church offers Holy Mass for the repose of the soul of **Winifred E. Payne**. We will commend her from the pastoral care of the Church on earth to whatever Almighty God has next in mind for her. Later, we will reverently bury her body, not because **Winnie's** soul no longer needs a body but because she will receive a new body from the Lord. **Winifred Payne** was in need of a new body and she would be the first to welcome that part of the gospel good news.

The Gospel is always a comfort to us, but no more so than at the time of the death of a loved one. We can only wonder what people do *without* Jesus Christ. Almighty God is no omnipotent tyrant creating us to suffer and die and be no more. He wants us to be faithful, certainly, and as a result of being in love and harmony with Him and His created order, to have *joy*, and not just for this life, but forever. Our blessed Lord said, "I have come that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly." We cannot have that more abundant life without Him. And the pledge of His great love for us is the Cross of Christ. God so loved the world that He *gave*. It does not say He *sent*. Anybody can send. For fifty-five cents you can send a card expressing your love and sympathy. Some of you here today could have done that. Many of you traveled a great many miles to be here. You gave your time to attend this Funeral Mass. You came as a sign of your love and to pay your respects. It means more to give than to send. And that is what Almighty God did. God *gave*. He gave us His Own Son to die for our sins and rise as a pledge of our own eternal life with Him. In this way Our Blessed Lord makes possible that more abundant life for us now. Winifred Payne's family will find comfort in the fact she is being cared for in such a way, in better ways than any of us can desire or pray for. His love, like His peace, passes our understanding. So we say in confidence **Winifred Payne** is in good hands.

Believing the gospel good news is indeed a comfort. It will not take away your grief and sense of loss. But you will mourn against the backdrop of God's love for your mother, grandmother, relative, and friend, and His love for you all. A loss is what it is, and grief is what you are experiencing. Life is not the same without your mom in it, and many people in this church today will also know what that means.

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So, after a loved one dies, how will you live in that world? Our Lord desires that through *all* the experiences of life we draw closer to Him. The gospel you just heard at Mass shows us what the Lord Jesus did. When Lazarus died Jesus did not come to Bethany to pay His respects and to mourn with the dead man's sisters Martha and Mary. He used the death of their brother to get Martha and Mary to realize more fully that He, Jesus, is the Lord of life. He said "Your brother will rise again. And Martha of Bethany gave a correct reply. "I believe he will rise at the last day." But then Jesus made it *personal*. He said "I am the Resurrection and the life." And Martha responded "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ." Martha had always known Jesus as a cherished family friend. But now she knew He was more. She knew Jesus was her Lord and Saviour. And that more abundant life God wants us all to have was now hers. For Martha, the death of her brother was the occasion for that to happen. That is just one of the many ways God can break through into our lives.

We have such a loving and gracious Saviour. **Winifred Payne** knew that. She knew where she had come from and where she was going. **Mrs. Payne** was a member of my congregation for almost twenty-eight years. And right to the end of her mortal life her focus was on the Lord. The last words I heard her cry out were: "Jesus, help me." **Eileen** and **Darryl** and I heard those words. She said it over and over. "Jesus, help me."

So now it is our honor and privilege to pray for **Winnie** that she will rest in peace. Before that peace is a philosophy or a word describing harmony and the absence of war, peace is a *person*. The angels at Bethlehem declared the birth of the Prince of Peace. They angels had it right. Jesus Himself is Peace. That means anything and anyone travelling the path of peace will eventually come to Jesus. And after a very long life and in recent years of failing health, *peace is good news* for **Winifred Payne**. And the peace of Christ is the prayer of the Church for each of you here, now as you pay your respect to **Winifred**, and in all your days to come.