

## Funeral Mass for Ron Novotny

Homily by Very Rev. Joseph L. Waters, J.C.L., V.F.

O God, who are mercy for sinners and the happiness of your Saints, give, we pray, to your servant Ron, for whom today we perform the fraternal offices of burial, a share with your chosen ones in the blessedness you give, so on the day of resurrection, free from the bonds of mortality, he may come before your face. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Homily:

As I look around this church today, I see so many people who have had a long and a very loving relationship with Ron. And because we have known Ron for so long, we know that he would not want us to talk much about him today. And we also know that no words of ours, no eloquence of ours can really add to the manifest greatness of this one who was a servant of the Lord. And we also know that he always forgave us when we didn't do what he told us.

As I was thinking about this homily today, I thought of a song that came back to my head. It came back over and over again, so I trusted it. It is an old song and I don't even know you did it but you will remember it probably. "Where do I begin to tell the story of how great a love has been." I think the most important thing about Ron were his loves.

Adrienne, the last time I spoke with Ron, I don't know whether you remember it, it was on the telephone. He had called me to tell me that he was not going to be able to make our spiritual direction session the next day because he was going back to the doctor because something had gone wrong. I don't know whether you were close enough to hear his side of the conversation, but after talking about his condition and other things, I asked him about you, and he spoke very beautifully about you, and his love for you and your care for him. Of the loves of Ron's life, you were one of the most important. When I was there to anoint Ron that Saturday afternoon, and I had the chance to listen to you talk to him and to give your final messages to him, I could tell from what you said as family and friends of Ron, how much he loved you and how much you knew that love.

But we all knew that no matter how much love Ron had for us, he had greater loves in his life. When we were thinking about why it was that he was hanging on, it was because I think in his last moment he wanted to show his great love for the Father, Son and Spirit. He went home to God on the feast of the Blessed Trinity, at high noon as someone said. Anyone who knew Ron knew of the great love he had for the persons of the Trinity. How often he spoke of them in prayer; how often he rested in their arms, and how importantly his intimacy with them was to him. He wanted nothing more than to be known as a son of the Father, a servant of Christ, and one who used the gifts of the Spirit given to him for the good of all. So Ron's love for the Holy Trinity, I think, is one of the things that help us know that love is one of those things that doesn't pass away with death.

Ron also loved greatly the Mother of God, Mary, Most Holy. Whenever we began our spiritual direction sessions, or whenever we ended them, he would enter into a talking to Mary. It was beautiful and it was born of a true friendship with her. He studied her of course. His degree in theology is Mariology but his knowledge of Mary didn't come from books. It was kneeling theology. It was learned in prayer; in an

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intimate relationship with her. He always was able to hear from her what her Son wanted of him. And it was she who always brought him more closely into the love of God, and the service of his brothers and sisters. He had a true love for the Blessed Mother.

He loved priests. I don't think I had a more enthusiastic cheerleader in all of my priesthood. No matter what the moment was, or what I was going through in my priesthood, he was there to remind me that as a priest of Jesus Christ I had his full support, and that the Lord was pleased in my attempts to serve him. His love for priests was profound, and he could speak of the goodness of priests in ways that I have never been able to see in others. He could speak about a lot of things about priests but he was unique in the fact that he could always see in a priest the goodness. Often times when I would be with him for spiritual direction, he was in the midst of counseling a priest who was in a time of difficulty in his ministry, and the way that he spoke about priesthood and how those men were struggling with priesthood, and how he was trying to evoke from them their priestly heart showed very deeply his love and care for the Church, and his care and love for the Church's priests.

Ron loved the Marian Servants. They were telling me about how he held his medal at the end. It was really a metaphor I think for how deeply and closely he held Marian Servants to his heart. He understood the importance of their charism, the power of their fraternity and prayer and the deep desire that the fruits of the Spirit that come to us through her [Mary's] intercession were needed in our Church today. And that those gifts should be manifest in the world through the witness of people like the Marian Servants.

I could go on and on because Ron's love was great, and Ron's ability to love was great. But he would also want us today to pray for him, that whatever stays on him from sin would be washed away.

He loved humility and he was a humble servant of the Lord. Always conscious of his failings, always wanting those failings to be purified in the love of God and the Divine Mercy that came to him through the sacraments. He was a great advocate of the sacraments and especially of confession. When I asked him to be my spiritual director, he insisted that if I were to do that, name him as my spiritual director, that I would commit to having a regular confessor, so that I would not miss that sacramental grace that comes through when you have a priest spiritual director.

A wonderful, wonderful man, Ron. I really believe that he showed us a tremendous lesson in the way he lived his life.

Many times when you come to a funeral we think it is too soon. But with Ron we may be wondering, how did he make it this far? But he spent his life as if it wasn't his own. And he never worried about spending his last measure of energy for the sake of what he was doing because what he was doing was important. And more than anybody else I have known over the years, death was not an enemy to him. It was a friend with whom he had made a pact. Keep it at bay for as long as possible but when it came it was time. And we have witnessed that over the last week or so haven't we. No fear of going home just a sadness about not being able to finish. When I stand here a couple of weeks from now and do the graduation, I know that he would have wanted to have been here, but I also know he will be here. I think that we can have confidence today as we pray for him for his love was for you and his love was truly lasting. And his love is stronger than death. And so we know that where he is now, there is no more bodily pain, no anguish

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of spirit, just the loving countenance of a Father, and the Son and the Spirit, and Mary welcoming him home.

I conclude by paraphrasing a favorite poem that we shared with each other, Ron and I, of John Cardinal Henry Neumann. I do not remember the name of the poem, but it has been memorialized in the song, Lead Kindly Light. And so to our God today we say, Lead Kindly Light, lead our friend home to that radiance which does not end.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace, Amen.