

Memorial Address for Carol

Rev. Kurt Horigan Asplundh

The Lord once entered the house of a man named Jairus whose little girl had just died. Her mother and father were crying because she had been their only daughter, and they were very sad to have lost her. Children are a most precious gift from the Lord and good parents have a deep love of their children.

“Do not weep,” the Lord said. “She is not dead, but sleeping” (Luke 8:52). And, when He had sent away those that doubted Him, He took her by the hand and called, “Little girl, arise.” To the astonishment of her father and mother the girl came to life again. You can imagine how happy they were to see their daughter alive and well.

The Lord performs this same miracle for everyone who dies. The only difference is that the Lord brought Jairus’ daughter back to life in this world. Others He awakens into heaven. These, too, rise up from the sleep that falls upon them at death, and are alive again, but in the spiritual world, having left their earthly bodies behind.

This is just as much a miracle as what the Lord did for Jairus’ daughter who had died. It is what the Lord meant when He said in the Word, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).

The Lord never wants children to become sick and die, but when they do, He takes them up immediately into heaven to be with the angels. There, they grow up and are taught so that they may afterwards be introduced into their own place in heaven and become angels of the Lord (see *Arcana Coelestia* 2289; *Heaven and Hell* 329).

Children are precious in the eyes of the Lord, and every child that dies is certain to become an angel in heaven. This is because all children are endowed with a heavenly quality while they are growing up. Once, when the people were bringing young children to the Lord so that He could touch them, and the disciples tried to turn them away the Lord was displeased. He said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God....’ And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them” (Mark 10:14-16).

This is the very thing that happens to children who die. The Lord takes them up into heaven. No one tries to stop them, for they are greatly loved by all the angels. They are taken into the home of an angel mother who has especially loved children. Every care is given them, and they are prepared to become angels when they have grown up.

This is what has taken place with our little friend, Carol. The Lord has called her to come to heaven, and she has just recently opened her eyes from the peaceful sleep she began three days ago. During that time, the most gentle of all the angels in heaven have been watching over her, waiting for her to awaken, and protecting her against any harm. No one would dare to harm a child with these angels nearby.

But now she is with angels of the spiritual heaven who have helped open her eyes to see this new world. They are answering all her questions and telling her what her new life in heaven will be like.

We are privileged to know some of these things, for they have been revealed to us from heaven by the Lord. We can read about the beautiful things of heaven, the paradisaal gardens, the magnificent houses, the crystalline atmosphere. Today we have already read something about the education of young girls in heaven. We learned that Carol probably will be together with three or four friends, each with her own room and her own belongings. She will find the clothes she needs in her cupboard; and, when there are special holidays, she will find a more beautiful dress to wear. She will be taught to do embroidery work on white linen cloth, which she may use to decorate her room, or to give to others.

Carol will be especially pleased to know that she is to have a little garden of her own, for she has always loved to grow flowers and plants. But in heaven, instead of having to wait as we do, until the snow melts and the warm weather arrives, she will be able to plant seeds immediately, for it is always springtime there.

She will have her own copy of the Word in heaven and will learn to read from it daily as she did while in this world.

Carol and her friends will be living in a society of heaven that has as its special use the teaching of those who have come into heaven as children. Children in heaven love to learn, and their teachers have wonderful ways of teaching, such as through living representations and acting out scenes in Tableaux and Pageants.

But only a part of the day is spent in this heavenly school. The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church teaches us that there is time for playing in the afternoons in heaven. Sometimes, the older girls are called upon to help with the little children, and they enjoy making garlands of flowers to put on them (see *Heaven and Hell* 337).

You can see all kinds of animals and birds in heaven. There are horses and, of course, sheep. Perhaps children there keep small animals as favorite pets, for there is something in heaven to fill the place of every good thing that we loved on earth.

We may wonder about how Carol will feel. Will she be lonely and afraid in the other world? Not in the least. The angels will be with her just as long as she wants them near and will give her a complete sense of security and peace. She will love her angel mother just as she loved her own mother in this world.

Will Carol be sick still? Not at all. She has left behind all her sickness and feels perfectly well again.

Will she be happy? Yes. She will be happier than ever before, because in heaven we are capable of feeling greater happiness than on earth. As the Psalmist has said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1).

When we think of Carol 's introduction into the heavens, we cannot feel sad for her sake.

Yet we still may ask, why? *Why* did this happen? “It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14). Why, then, did the Lord allow Carol to die as a child from a terrible sickness?

The Lord permits what He does not will. This is for the sake of human freedom and salvation. There is but one purpose of life on earth, and that is that there may be a heaven from the human race. The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, provides for this in ways we sometimes cannot understand. But of this we are certain: Nothing is permitted which cannot be turned to something good.

The Lord foresees a very special place in heaven for children who die. We are taught that infants who have died and become angels, make up a third part of the entire heaven (see *Heaven and Hell* 4).

We know that Carol is being prepared now, in heaven, for a heavenly use that we could never have prepared her for on earth. And we, too, are being led by the Lord, through the circumstances of this apparent tragedy, to become stronger and better people. The teaching of the Word is true that “the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9).

We may not see the Divine good and the Divine mercy in a tragedy while our minds are focussed on our natural loss. What we fail to see is the spiritual gain that is possible, not only to the heavens, but to people on earth as well. Such is the wonder and omniscience of the Divine Wisdom. “It is of the Providence of the Lord,” we read, that people are brought into the other world. And in this way, we are told, the kingdom of the Lord is “cared for, the welfare of which is universal Providence” (*Spiritual Experiences* 5003).

We can contrast our sorrow and our sense of loss with the joy that is felt by the angels in welcoming newcomers, especially children, to spiritual life.

Inevitably, Carol's family and friends feel a terrible loss. Yet, even in states of grief the Lord is working to bring good from evil. There can be a precious closeness shared between members of the family, a common turning to the Lord for strength. The minds of all of us may be softened and opened to perceive the reality and nearness of the spiritual world. It offers us a time to reflect on eternal values.

And so let us not lose faith in the Lord's mercy, for, indeed, “His tender mercies are over all His works.” Let us pray that the states of heaven may sustain and comfort us. And let us never forget the hope of eternal life, which should abide with us.

*One thing I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek;
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,*

*To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to inquire in His temple...
[Therefore] Teach me Your way, O Lord,
And lead me in a smooth path...
I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the Lord
In the land of the living.
Wait on the Lord;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the Lord!*

(Psalm 27:4,11,13-14).

Amen.

Readings: Luke 8:41-42,49-55; Mark 10:13-16; *Spiritual Experiences* 5660-5666; *Arcana Coelestia* 2289

This memorial address was delivered in 1978 in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, for Carol who died at age eleven. Her parents have given permission for this address to be used on www.newchurchvineyard.org in the hope that it will bring comfort other families who have lost a child.