

IN NOMINE JESU

## THE GOOD CONFESSION OF THE FAITH!

Our homily for the Feast of the Confession of St. Peter, this day the Church in this place has chosen to remember the Faith that God gave His servant Dorothy Oldenburg, is taken from the Gospel of St. John. Hear again as Jesus says:

*If someone may continue to serve Me, he must continue to follow Me; then where I AM, there also My servant remains. If someone may continue to serve Me, the Father will honor him.<sup>1</sup>*

Richard, Rosemary, family and friends of Dorothy Anna Regina Springer Oldenburg:

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

God has gathered us today in this place on the day when the Church, long ago, chose to annually remember the great confession of St. Peter about Jesus: *You remain the Christ!*<sup>2</sup> In time, in history, that confession came after Jesus had been worshipped by the Wise Men in Bethlehem. In time, the good confession of Jesus as the Christ came before His chosen few saw Him in His full divine glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

It is the confession that Jesus is the Anointed One of God, the Son of Man and Son of God joined in our flesh to bear our sins into death, to grant us His victory, which sustained Dorothy Oldenburg all the way into nine decades of mortal life. It is the good confession of the Faith which held her fast to the Lord of all Creation into the end of her earthly days. It is the good confession of the Faith which God used to bring her into His eternal presence on Epiphany morning this year. That is the service of which Jesus speaks when He declares to those who desired to see Him:

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<sup>1</sup> John 12:26.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 8:29b.

*If someone may continue to serve Me, he must continue to follow Me; then where I AM, there also My servant remains. If someone may continue to serve Me, the Father will honor him.<sup>3</sup>*

That service the Lord works in His own, and He gives and sustains them in His confession of the Faith throughout their lives. It is always a blessing when the Lord delivers His own fully from this sinful world, to present them to His Father, to grant them His honor. To those who confess the Faith of Christ, that truth seems even more special when God carries His own to His heavenly home on one of the white days of the Church – the Feasts of Christ. The white color of this Festival week stands today as a reminder that Dorothy Oldenburg is now fully one of the saints. She is with those who are revealed through the inspired, inerrant Word of God to be worthy to wear the spotless garments given them by Christ Jesus.

That was done for her by God, when He washed away her sins, when she died and rose to new life in Christ. Saint Dorothy was spiritually given her white robe by God as He baptized her. In 1928, in the Rite of Confirmation, she confessed that God had declared her worthy of being clothed in Christ on account of His gifts to her. She promised that she would hold fast in the confession of Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of her sins unto death. Throughout her life, God held her firm in this confession of the Faith: namely the eternal truth that Jesus died for her sins and rose again from the dead to present her right before our heavenly Father. In places such as this, and at the dinner table on North Crest Avenue, Dorothy repeatedly was encouraged by God's message that Jesus had forgiven her sins, and would be with her all the days of her life, into eternity. She knew and believed these words to be true:

*If someone may continue to serve Me, he must continue to follow Me; then where I AM, there also My servant remains. If someone may continue to serve Me, the Father will honor him.<sup>4</sup>*

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On the day which St. Dorothy was fully honored before the Father of all, as Jesus presented her to Him fully removed from this fallen world, the western part of the Church Universal celebrated the Epiphany of our Lord. It is on the annual remembrance of the Epiphany that the Church celebrates the appearance of the Son of God in our flesh, in the Person of Jesus, in a home in Bethlehem, to Wise Men of the East while He was less than two years of age.

How fitting it is that, on that memorial Sunday this year, Jesus appeared to Dorothy, calling her through the Faith into His home so that she now dwells with Him, and the Father, in the Spirit forever. That she is with our Lord now, and was through all her life, is a testimony to the Faith God has, and the gift of that Faith which He gives. What a wonder it is that, when the Church gathered that day around the Table of the Lord, Dorothy was numbered among the saints on the other side of the Table from us sinners. She has reclined where no one sins, where death has no dominion, where the Feast is unending.

All of these wonders may declared true today, whether you believe them or not (God's Faith and His faithfulness do not depend upon any human's belief), the reality of heaven's bliss for those who fall asleep in Him is true because God, in time, long ago, fulfilled His words which were spoken into your ears just moments ago:

*"And Jesus continued to answer them, saying, "It has come, the hour that the Son of Man may be glorified."<sup>5</sup>*

Words framed from that prophecy are those which now Saint Dorothy Oldenburg hungered to hear when her pastors brought her the Body and Blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of her sins. As she was physically no longer able to come to the Lord's Services in the Church, the Church brought the Lord's Services to her. In the past few months, each month when the Lord came to her in Word and Sacraments at first Patricia's, then Robin's place, she would say, "Oh Pastor, I told Richard, when he asked, that you would be here soon."

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<sup>5</sup> John 12:23.

She always had a greeting of acceptance and wonder when her pastor came to bring her Christ's forgiveness... except this past October. That visit, she began with the "I knew you would be here..." and then was unable to speak as she saw her former Wednesday Divine Service friends as her chair turned toward them. That day, we all gathered around the dinner table, and Christ came to us with His gifts, and Dorothy simply received... (I understand she was full of good things to say about the visit after we all left - but we will leave that for you all to discuss with Richard and Rosemary after this Lord's Service). Now, we have these words of the Lord of the Universe to contemplate:

*Truly, truly, I continue to say to all of you, if not the grain of wheat, having fallen into the earth may have died, it alone remains; but, if it may have died, much fruit it continues to bear. "6*

With those words, Jesus speaks about His coming death to all who will hear. His words declare that He is the One who will fall into the earth - to be buried as eyewitnesses declared, in a virgin tomb. The Son of Man, Jesus, died in sin - not His sin, but the sins of the whole world, in your sins. His Word proclaims that, from His being planted into the earth, much fruit would be born from that which rose from the earth. He rose from the dead as the first-fruits of the resurrection of the blessed dead. The reputable eye-witnesses of His resurrection from the dead spread the message of His victory over sin, death, and even Hell itself, until they were called from life into life. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God moved men to record His word of death to sin and resurrection to life eternal. Their words He preserved without any teaching error into our age.

His Word He delivered into the ears, then heart and life of Dorothy Oldenburg. In Christ, Dorothy was delivered into this world to live under God's grace on a Sunday in 1915.<sup>7</sup> In Christ, in a firm confession of His Faith, Dorothy was delivered into the eternal kingdom of God's grace on a Sunday in 2013. In Christ, God is

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<sup>6</sup> John 12:24.

<sup>7</sup> Internet. <http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/?year=1915&country=1>, accessed January 17, 2013.

delivering His Word of life into your ears today. He does so that you too may someday be translated in the Faith into His eternal Kingdom of grace. This Word is now delivered to you, as Jesus still says:

*The one brotherly-loving his soul continues to lose her, and the one hating his soul in this cosmos into life eternal will guard her.<sup>8</sup>*

Jesus, even as He speaks of His death to bring life eternal to all who believe, declares God's revealed reality for all humans. His words are not speculation, they are truth. To the person who loves as a brother his or her own life and soul, will come a day when he or she will lose it. No human, in himself or herself, has the power to love self into eternity. No matter how tenaciously a person holds onto this life, it will, someday, be lost.

But, to the person who hears and believes the Word of Jesus, there is a love given that supersedes any hope for attachment we might hold for this fallen creation. It is the love that gives His all, His life into death that we might live in Him forever. As a person holds to this life – the Life of Christ – through the means He has provided – His inspired, inerrant Word, His Baptism, His Absolution, His Supper – eternal life is guarded. God gives life in Christ, and in Him, He sustains it. Hear again the call of God to His faithful, that in which He sustained Dorothy into blessed life everlasting:

*If someone may continue to serve Me, he must continue to follow Me; then where I AM, there also My servant remains. If someone may continue to serve Me, the Father will honor him.<sup>9</sup>*

Dorothy knew in part, as she now knows in full, that those who serve Christ are those who follow Him where He has promised to be, to where He has promised to lead. All who are of the Faith serve Christ in receiving His gifts – of forgiveness, life, and salvation. They follow where He leads – to the cross (be that of

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<sup>8</sup> John 12:25.

<sup>9</sup> John 12:26.

losing one's independence, or mobility, and especially for suffering for one's confession of Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of sins). The faithful hear and believe that where Jesus leads is, in the end, into the full Presence of the Father. There we will be given His glory. There we will be given a home forever in bodies that will someday be raised from death. In the end, we believers in Christ, with Dorothy and all those now sainted, will reign with Christ Jesus in a new heavens and earth.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Feast of the Confession of St. Peter, Friday

Memorial Service for Dorothy Anna Regina Springer Oldenburg

Psalm 23; Genesis 4:2-8; I Corinthians 15:35-44; John 12:23-26

January 18, 2013

*Pastor Michael H. Morehouse*

**SOLI DEO GLORIA**