



Seelos *and* Sanctity

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WHERE IS SHE ???

This month I decided to print a series of letters from a recent correspondence of mine. I hope it may prove helpful to anyone who suffers from the same problem as Michael. I have changed the names but all else is exactly as originally written.

Father Vaughn

Dear Father:

Thank you for the wonderful letter you sent me. It was very comforting. I never gave much thought to death and now that it has taken the only person I loved and cherished dearly it makes me wonder of many things. It is all so confusing.

Where is she? Where did she go? Will she be waiting for me? If so where? Is she longing for me over there like I do here for her? What is she doing there alone by herself? What kind of a life is she living?

Many, many things flash through my mind and no answers. I get common ordinary answers that do me no good. I'm looking for true, positive answers and I have no idea where can I get them.

One thing I know for sure — She will never be forgotten and I will never be the same now since she is no longer with me. Life without her is meaningless and empty. It is full of memories and loneliness. It will take a long, long time to get used to it.

Thank you very, very much.

Yours truly,

Michael

Dear Michael:

I have read your beautiful letter and I must confess that I have indeed been singularly touched by it. Somehow you express a real emptiness of spirit. The way you express yourself enables any reader to readily

identify with you. Anyone who reads your letter can so quickly understand what you are saying because all of us in one way or another have had to suffer from emptiness of spirit.

You say you are looking for answers—that you get common ordinary answers but these answers do you no good. I cannot hope to do any better than those who have tried to answer your questions before me. My answers will indeed be common ordinary answers precisely because these are the only answers available.

As I sense what you are now going through I feel that you are bucking against the same age-old mystery that has baffled mankind for centuries. The reason why the common ordinary answers do not satisfy you is because you are looking for the answer to a mystery - a mystery you know is something that man's mind cannot fully understand.

I am reminded of a little legend that is told of St. Augustine who was trying to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity but could not do so. While walking on the seashore he saw a little boy digging a hole in the sand and pouring buckets of ocean water into the hole. "What are you doing?" Augustine asked. "I am going to pour the ocean into this hole" was the reply. "Why, look, you silly little boy, can you not see that the ocean is too large and the hole is too small?" "Yes, Augustine" was the reply. "But can you not see that the mind of God is too big and your mind is too small?"

Too often our problems in life are the direct results of trying to pour the vast wisdom of God into our poor insignificant little minds. It is impossible.

St. Paul says, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the power of God. How incomprehensible are His judgments, how unsearchable His ways!" Your basic question is why did God take Rita away from you? Unfortunately, the mind we have as humans is too small to comprehend the answer. Only the depth and breadth of the divine mind can comprehend this mystery.

You may be interested in knowing that over 2,500 years ago a man named Job came up against the same problem. A whole book

in the Bible is dedicated to a discussion of this problem. In the end the only conclusion they could reach is that the problem of evil is a mystery that man's mind cannot comprehend.

Perhaps St. Paul, in the Book of Romans, Chapter 8, Verse 18 gives us some hint as to what the answer might be when he says, "the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us." Somehow there is a glorious end to this life of suffering but eye has not seen it, nor has ear heard it, nor has it entered into anyone's mind precisely what this glory might be.

Something rather wonderful and beautiful comes forth from your letter. As I read it, I thought of the many men in this world who, when they lose their wives, do not feel as you do. Somehow the beautiful relationship that developed between you and Rita never developed in their marriage. Somewhere I heard this quotation "better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." While indeed you are now plunged into a most painful emptiness of spirit you do have many very beautiful memories of a loving relationship. How sad is a lot of those who lose a wife and do not have the beautiful memories that you now enjoy. Try to think of the happy times you shared with Rita.

You say it will take a long, long time to get used to it. However, like the millions of people who have endured this same type of suffering, you somehow will manage to pick up the pieces of life and carry on.

May the Lord in His ever loving kindness grant you the strength to take up this cross and follow after Him.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. John J. Vaughn, C.S.S.R.

P.S. I am enclosing a little article I wrote for the March issue of "Seelos & Sanctity" entitled "The Meaning of Pain." Although this article has been written for sick people in hospitals enduring physical pain I think you will find many of these thoughts likewise

apply to the suffering you are now enduring. I would like to publish your letter and my reply in the hope that it might comfort others who are suffering as you are. I trust you will not mind.

Dear Father Vaughn:

Thank you very much for taking such interest in me and taking the time from your valuable work to write to me. Your letter made me understand that what I seek is impossible to comprehend. It made me realize also that I am asking for something probably no human being ever had the courage to ask for, and if he did, he never received an answer. Like you said — God is too big for our little minds to comprehend. I agree.

Thank you for the article "The Meaning of Pain." I read it and believe me every word of it is true. I know because my wife Rita, went through it. She was operated and spent 14 days in intensive care. Complications set in - her response was poor and finally she was hit with a stroke that paralyzed her whole left side. She could not walk, could not use her left arm, she was helpless. She either laid in bed or sat a while in a wheel-chair, depending on someone to help her because alone she could not do it.

For one year - day and night - I looked at her, consoled her, hoping something would happen that she would get better. Finally toward the end she must have got tired of it all. The battle she was putting up was weakening her. She lost interest in many things and pneumonia set in. She was in a coma for two days and one night. Before she died I had the parish priest come and give her the last rites. Once before when she was failing I had the priest come and she started to get better. But this last time she didn't.

So you see that article on pain strikes home, because I went through it. Not by physical pain, but by standing by, very helpless and dumb. Not knowing what to do next, hoping, praying something would happen to relieve the pains she was having. And then with her eyes closed as if she was sleeping she quietly passed away. No word - no motion - no nothing - just a quiet departure to somewhere, some place I do not know.

You can use my letter as much as you want, any time you want. What I wrote in it is very true. The only thing I ask is - when you use it could I have a copy of that newsletter or whatever it is for my souvenir? In memory of my wife Rita — Gone but not forgotten.

Also enclosed \$1.00 for subscription to Seelos and Sanctity. Also if possible the literature on him. I never heard of him. Maybe if I get to know him through prayers he will probably give me some spiritual consolation.

Thank you very much.

Michael



A PRAYER TO FATHER SEELOS

For your own intentions, and all the petitions placed before the tomb of Father Seelos, let us pause and say -

O MY GOD, I TRULY BELIEVE YOU ARE PRESENT WITH ME. I ADORE YOUR LIMITLESS PERFECTIONS. I THANK YOU FOR THE GRACES AND GIFTS YOU GAVE TO FATHER SEELOS. IF IT IS YOUR HOLY WILL, PLEASE LET HIM BE DECLARED A SAINT OF THE CHURCH SO THAT OTHERS MAY KNOW AND IMITATE HIS HOLY LIFE. THROUGH HIS PRAYERS PLEASE GIVE ME THIS FAVOR

Please print your name when sending this enclosed contribution envelope. Handwriting is frequently difficult to read; thus slowing the posting of contributions.

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