

## **L-OMELIJA TAL-FUNERAL TA' DUN TANCRED SULTANA**

*May I start by saying a particular word of encouragement to the close family members of Fr Tancred, by referring to Phil. 3. "We are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own."*

*I offer you my personal condolences, the condolences of the priests and faithful in Gibraltar and the condolences of all those who are participating in this requiem Mass. Fr Tancred, as his family commented immediately when they got to know of Fr Tancred's passing away, started his priestly ministry in Gibraltar and he finished his ministry in Gibraltar. He loved Gibraltar where he spent the first three years of his ministry and for the last five years he would visit to cover for priests who were taking a break. All those who knew him appreciated his sense of service and commitment as a priest. As one told me when he heard of his death, he was a hands-on priest.*

*In Gibraltar all the priests offered masses for his eternal rest as soon as they were informed of his death, and the special mass celebrated in the Cathedral for his eternal rest soon after he passed away was testimony to the appreciation that people had for him.*

*We come full of gratitude to God for the friendship and for the ministry which have bound us over many years with Fr Tancred. Humanly we still come with heavy hearts as we reflect on the pain of loss that we experience and the void that the passing of Fr Tancred has left in our hearts and our lives.*

*Fr Tancred dedicated his life in service to and within the Church. In the depths of his priestly ministry he loved the Church. His devotion to the mass and to the Eucharist became the daily nourishment of his spiritual growth in this life.*

*We are saddened by his death, but more importantly, we are grateful that we were touched by his life. We are joyful that the promise of our baptism is now fulfilled fully and finally for Father Tancred. St Paul tells us "We who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death... so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life... with him."*

*We commend Fr Tancred to the grace and mercy of God whom he served so generously and well, trusting that the Lord is true to His Word and will give him rest and peace and glory.*

*Matul ħajjitna, nagħmlu ħafna affarijiet mingħajr ma naħsbu wisq, ir-rutina ta' kuljum mingħajr ħafna drama jew storbu. Iżda l-mewt tgħallimna li jasal il-ħin meta nagħmlu dak*

li għalina hu rutina għall-aħħar darba. Għada mhu garantit għal hadd. Ikun hemm il-waqt meta nifthu l-purtieri u l-bieb għall-aħħar darba, meta nitkellmu ma' min inħobbu għall-aħħar darba, meta nissnu isem għall-aħħar darba.

Hi grazzja t'Alla li huma ftit li jkunu jafu meta jasal dak il-waqt tal-aħħar. Fr Tancred ċertament ma kellux dik l-esperjenza. Alla sejjaħ lil dan is-saċerdot prudenti u umli għall-mistrieħ ta' dejjem mingħajr avviż minn qabel.

Meta wasal Ġibiltà kollox deher normali. Ma wera ebda sinjal li kien hemm xi problema serja ta' saħħa. Kilna flimkien matul il-vjaġġ lejn Ġibiltà. Din is-sena offretlu l-kwartieri tiegħi fil-katidral bħala apprezzament għall-pjaċir li kien qed jagħmilli. Il-mewt tiegħu għal għarrieda matul il-lejl hasdet lil kulhadd.

L-Evanġelju li qrajna għażiltu għax kien l-Evanġelju li gie f'moħħi meta ċempluli mill-isptar biex jinfumawni li diżgrazzjament kien halliema. Jien offretlu l-aħjar kmamar li kien hemm fil-katidral. Fl-aħħar ċena Ġesù jgħid li fid-dar ta' missieru hemm hafna għamajjar, u li hu kien sejjer biex jipprepara post għad-dixxipli tiegħu. U hekk Fr Tancred, flok fil-kmamar li ppreparajtlu jien, mar fil-kmamar li Kristu pprepara għalih bħala premju għas-servizz li ta matul ħajtu lil Alla u lill-Knisja. Fl-aħħar mar fejn kien imsejjaħ bħala ċittadin tas-sema pajjiżna.

Aħna mdorrijin nisimgħu dwar id-difetti tas-saċerdoti. Aħna lkoll bnedmin bin-nuqqasijiet tagħna, u forsi hemm min jinduna b'difetti fina li lanqas aħna stess ma nindunaw bihom. Imma llum hi okkażjoni meta għandna niriflettu dwar is-sbuħija tas-saċerdozju. Hemm bżonn inżommu f'moħħna li l-qassis hu riflessjoni tal-ħniena t'Alla u tal-Misteru tal-Ewkaristija. Dawn iż-żewġ realtajiet huma konnessi ma' xulxin b'mod intimu.

Is-sbuħija tas-saċerdozju tikkonsisti fil-fatt li hu Alla li jagħżel, u hu ma jagħżilx angli. "Mhux intom għażiltuni, iżda jien għażiltkom u ħartkom biex tmorru tagħmlu l-frott" (Ġw 15:16).

Alla jpoġġi t-teżor tas-saċerdozju f'garar tal-fuħħar, li faċli jixxaqu u jixxellfu. Il-fuħħar hu fragli, iżda t-teżor ġo fih mhux. Il-missjoni tas-saċerdot tikkonsisti f'li jipprovi l-imħabba u l-kompassjoni t'Alla lill-oħrajn. Is-saċerdot jgħidlek: 'Jien naħfirlek dnubietek' u din id-dikjarazzjoni toffri ċ-ċertezza tal-maħfra.

Is-saċerdot joffrilna wkoll il-ġisem ta' Kristu. Meta fil-konsagrazzjoni jgħid: 'Dan hu ġismi mogħti għalikom', daww il-kliem qed jgħidhom Ġesù stess. Is-saċerdot mhux biss joffri l-maħfra t'Alla, u jqarbinna bil-ġisem ta' Kristu, iżda jagħtina wkoll il-ħin tiegħu u lest jismagħna mingħajr ma jibgħatilna l-kont. Il-missjoni tas-saċerdot hi wkoll li joffri tama u konsolazzjoni lil daww li huma morda, u jafdana fl-idejn ħanina t'Alla.

Bħalma jgħidilna San Pawl, il-qassis jifraħ ma' min jifraħ u jibki ma' min jibki, għax jimpurtah mill-oħrajn, mhux bħala wieħed kurjuż iżda bħala wieħed li jrid jaqsam ma' ħutu l-ferħ u d-dwejjaq tagħhom.

Nirringrazzjaw lil Fr Tancred għal dak kollu li għamel għalina. Nirringrazzjaw lil Alla li tana lil Fr Tancred.

Agħtih o Mulej il-mistrieħ ta' dejjem.

Ammen.

✠ Mons. Carmel Zammit

Isqof ta' Ġibiltà