

*The following is a transcript of the homily by Rev. Paul Scalia, the son of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, at the funeral Mass for his father at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.*

Your Eminence Cardinal Wuerl, Your Excellencies, Archbishop Viganò, Bishop Loverde, Bishop Higgins, my brother priests, deacons, distinguished guests, dear friends and faithful gathered:

On behalf of our mother and the entire Scalia family, I want to thank you for your presence here, for your many words of consolation, and even more for the many prayers and Masses you have offered at the death of our father, Antonin Scalia.

In particular I thank Cardinal Wuerl, first for reaching out so quickly and so graciously to console our mother. It was a consolation to her and therefore to us as well. Thank you also for allowing us to have this parish funeral Mass here in this basilica dedicated to Our Lady. What a great privilege and consolation that we were able to bring our father through the holy doors and for him gain the indulgence promised to those who enter in faith.

I thank Bishop Loverde, the bishop of our diocese of Arlington, a bishop our father liked and respected a great deal. Thank you, Bishop Loverde, for your prompt visit to our mother, for your words of consolation, for your prayers.

The family will depart for the private burial immediately after Mass and will not have time to visit, so I want to express our thanks at this time so that you all know our profound appreciation and thanks. You will notice in the program mention of a memorial that will be held on March 1st. We hope to see many of you there. We hope the Lord will repay your great goodness to us.

We are gathered here because of one man. A man known personally to many of us, known only by reputation to even more. A man loved by many, scorned by others. A man known for great controversy, and for great compassion. That man, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth.

It is He whom we proclaim. Jesus Christ, son of the father, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, buried, risen, seated at the right hand of the Father. It is because of him. because of his life, death and resurrection that we do not mourn as those who have no hope, but in confidence we commend Antonin Scalia to the mercy of God.

Scripture says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever. And that sets a good course for our thoughts and our prayers here today. In effect, we look in three directions. To yesterday, in thanksgiving. To today, in petition. And into eternity, with hope.

We look to Jesus Christ yesterday, that is, to the past, in thanksgiving for the blessings God bestowed upon Dad. In the past week, many have recounted what Dad did for them. But here today, we recount what God did for Dad, how he blessed him.

We give thanks first of all for the atoning death and life-giving resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our Lord died and rose not only for all of us, but also for each of us. And at this time we look to that yesterday of his death and resurrection, and we give thanks that he died and rose for Dad.

Further, we give thanks that Jesus brought him to new life in baptism, nourished him with the Eucharist, and healed him in the confessional.

We give thanks that Jesus bestowed upon him 55 years of marriage to the woman he loved, a woman who could match him at every step, and even hold him accountable.

God blessed Dad with a deep Catholic faith: The conviction that Christ's presence and power continue in the world today through His body, the Church. He loved the clarity and coherence of the church's teachings. He treasured the church's ceremonies, especially the beauty of her ancient worship. He trusted the power of her sacraments as the means of salvation as Christ working within him for his salvation.

Although one time, one Saturday afternoon, he did scold me for having heard confessions that afternoon, that same day. And I hope that it's some source of consolation, if there are any lawyers present, that the Roman collar was not a shield against his criticism.

The issue that evening was not that I had been hearing confessions, but that he had found himself in my confessional line, and he quickly departed it. As he put it later, "Like heck if I'm confessing to you!"

The feeling was mutual.

God blessed Dad, as is well known, with a love for his country. He knew well what a close-run thing the founding of our nation was. And he saw in that founding, as did the founders themselves, a blessing, a blessing quickly lost when faith is banned from the public square, or when we refuse to bring it there. So he understood that there is no conflict between loving God and loving one's country, between one's faith and one's public service. Dad understood that the deeper he went in his Catholic faith, the better a citizen and public servant he became. God blessed him with the desire to be the country's good servant *because* he was God's first.

We Scalias, however, give thanks for a particular blessing God bestowed. God blessed Dad with a love for his family. We have been thrilled to read and hear the many words of praise and admiration for him, for his intellect, his writings, his speeches, his influence and so on.

But more important to us — and to him — is that he was Dad. He was the father that God gave us for the great adventure of family life. Sure he forgot our names at times, or mixed them up, but there *are* nine of us.

He loved us, and sought to show that love. And sought to share the blessing of the faith he treasured. And he gave us one another, to have each other for support. That's the greatest wealth parents can bestow, and right now we are particularly grateful for it.

So we look to the past, to Jesus Christ yesterday. We call to mind all of these blessings, and we give our Lord the honor and glory for them, for they are His work. We look to Jesus today, in petition, to the present moment, here and now, as we mourn the one we love and admire, the one whose absence pains us. Today we pray for him. We pray for the repose of his soul. We thank God for his goodness to Dad as is right and just. But we also know that although dad believed, he did so imperfectly, like the rest of us. He tried to love God and neighbor, but like the rest of us did so imperfectly.

He was a practicing Catholic, "practicing" in the sense that he hadn't perfected it yet. Or rather, Christ was not yet perfected in him. And only those in whom Christ is brought to perfection can enter heaven. We are here, then, to lend our prayers to that perfecting, to that final work of God's grace, in freeing Dad from every encumbrance of sin.

But don't take my word for it. Dad himself, not surprisingly, had something to say on the matter. Writing years ago to a Presbyterian minister whose funeral service he admired, he summarized quite nicely the pitfalls of funerals and why he didn't like eulogies.

He wrote: "Even when the deceased was an admirable person, indeed *especially* when the deceased was an admirable person, praise for his virtues can cause us to forget that we are praying for and giving thanks for God's inexplicable mercy to a sinner."

Now he would not have exempted himself from that. We are here then, as he would want, to pray for God's inexplicable mercy to a sinner. To this sinner, Antonin Scalia. Let us not show him a false love and allow our admiration to deprive him of our prayers. We continue to show affection for him and do good for him by praying for him: That all stain of sin be washed away, that all wounds be healed, that he be purified of all that is not Christ. That he rest in peace.

Finally we look to Jesus forever, into eternity. Or better, we consider our own place in eternity and whether it will be with the Lord. Even as we pray for Dad to enter swiftly into eternal glory, we should be mindful of ourselves. Every funeral reminds us of just how thin the veil is between this world and the next, between time and eternity, between the opportunity for conversion and the moment of judgment.

So we cannot depart here unchanged. It makes no sense to celebrate God's goodness and mercy to Dad if we are not attentive and responsive to those realities in our own lives. We must allow this encounter with eternity to change us, to turn us from sin and towards the Lord.

The English Dominican, Father Bede Jarrett, put it beautifully when he prayed, "O strong son of God, while you prepare a place for us, prepare us also for that happy place, that we may be with you and with those we love for all eternity."

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever,.

My dear friends, this is also the structure of the Mass, the greatest prayer we can offer for Dad, because it's not our prayer, but the Lord's. The Mass looks to Jesus yesterday. It reaches into the

past — reaches to the Last Supper, to the crucifixion, to the resurrection — and it makes those mysteries and their power present here on this altar.

Jesus himself becomes present here today under the form of bread and wine so that we can unite all our prayers of thanksgiving, sorrow and petition with Christ himself as an offering to the father. And all of this with a view to eternity, stretching towards heaven, where we hope one day to enjoy that perfect union with God himself and to see Dad again and, with him, rejoice in the communion of saints.

*Rev. Paul Scalia is a Roman Catholic priest in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia and the son of Justice Antonin Scalia.*