**Sermon Funeral Patricia Carlson**

**Fr. Travis Heide**

**Text:** *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:14-15)*

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the great teachers of postmodern Western thought, was also a talented playwright. His most performed and studied play is *Huis Clos* often translated *No Exit*. The plot revolves around three lost souls: Garcin, Inès, and Estelle, condemned to torment one another in a quite innovative concept of hell: a hotel room. Now, pardon my French, but let me reproduce this dialogue between the characters Inès and Estelle:

*(Inès :) « Mais qu’est-ce que ça peut faire ? Puisqu’il faut souffrir, autant que ce soit par toi. Assieds-toi. Approche-toi. Encore. Regarde dans mes yeux : est-ce que tu t’y vois ? » (Estelle :) « Je suis toute petite. » (Inès :) « Je me vois très mal. Je te vois, moi. Tout entière. Pose-moi des questions. Aucun miroir ne sera plus fidèle. »*

The point is that each of the three principal characters looks to the other for validation. Each one is eternally condemned to the pursuit of a declaration that they are worthy of love and admiration. Sartre’s play climaxes with the hotel door opening; but instead of making an escape from hell, Garcin slams shut the door because he would sooner have the other two judge him well than poorly. The question left to the audience is: why would anyone choose to remain in that state?

If Sartre got one thing right, it wasn’t his poorly deduced doctrine that for every non-human object, its essence precedes its existence; while what distinguishes human beings is somehow that their existence precedes their essence. No; how can a human be called a human being if our human essence doesn’t come from somewhere outside our own imagination? From outside of our four-walled “existence” determined by fleeting prospects of material or personal satisfaction?

Contrariwise, Holy Scripture teaches us what logic alone would: that God created “the heavens and the earth,” including each one of us. By His Word and Spirit – the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity – God the Father in an act of pure love called all things into being, giving them their essence and their dignity. He declares in the beginning that all He had created was *tov ma’od*, “very good.” (Gen 1:31) The subtext to this grand play of creation is that we do not need validation from other people; beauty is not in the eye of the beholder, but in the eyes of the Creator.

Another, vastly more reasonable philosopher, the Augustinian monk Hugh of St. Victor, gives us a glimpse into the precious declaration God made at our beginning. “Great indeed,” he writes in *Concerning the Sacraments*, “was the dignity of man’s foundation, because it was made such that no good would suffice it except the highest.” Nothing but the best will do; nothing brings ultimate satisfaction in this life except the awareness that we are made for more than this material world and this present life can offer. The doomed quest for validation is a poor and murky “mirror.”

The capacity to know God, to reason out that we are not self-made beings but come into being through the powerful declaration of a higher power, is what we call the “image of God.” And the image of God is not reserved for an élite class among humans; no, every human person is lovingly fashioned in this image from our mother’s wombs. This is also the reason St. James in his Epistle tells us not to despise anyone. “There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy,” the bishop of Jerusalem writes; “But who are you to judge your neighbor?” (4:12)

God our Father determines our worth, our value, and no one else. The material-bound eyes of the world may look at someone suffering, someone on their last legs, someone poor, exploited, or otherwise powerless, and think of him or her as having a lesser “existence.” Not so. The Forty-First Psalm describes God’s character in this way: “Blessed is the one who considers the poor! In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him”; “The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.” (Ps 41:1, 3) And this He will, if not in this life, in the resurrection.

As Mary, the Mother of God, confesses: “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has regarded the humble estate of his servant; for behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:46-48). And our Lord Jesus Christ showed compassion to His disciples when He said that, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” (John 16:13)

The Lord of the Church makes this further promise: “He –” that is, the Holy Spirit – “will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:14-15) As in our formation, our reformation into the image of our Savior Jesus Christ has nothing to do with our prior merits, much less our self- or socially constructed image. We are conformed to the image of the Son.

In Holy baptism, Patricia was clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness that covered all her sin. God declared her to be so. Assuredly if Patricia could be speaking to us right now, she would repeat that declaration by the power of the Holy Spirit whom she received. Our dearly departed sister would say with the Church on earth and in heaven: Glory be to God the Father, glory be to God the Son, glory be to God the Spirit; the Lord is our salvation.