

Paul Charpentier

Funeral Service

Saturday, November 3, 2012

Minister Graylin Ross' Introduction

We are gathered today to celebrate the life of our beloved friend, Paul Charpentier, and to express our gratitude for having been touched by the dedication of this devoted man.

We offer our love and respect to Paul's two sisters, and to his family by marriage to Beatrice, their daughters Ginette and Sylvie, their son Mark and to two grandchildren; and to his family by marriage to Jennifer and their daughters Chantale, Andrea and Lisa.

Each student shapes the school through their being and presence. Paul in his gentle way raised us through his example of inconspicuous service, and through his reverence for the Gods, our Beloved Teacher and for his fellow students.

Let us stand, and honor Paul with our silent presence.

(Silence)

Thank-you.

As Paul returns to the divine source, let us remember that we share the same passage. Robert said, "Ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared, having received the presence allotted to them in this lifetime." And Paul was prepared. A few days before his death, Paul received a fortune cookie that told him, "You have to finish all your tasks." Death is preparation for another phase, the phase of the soul.

Music: Anicca and Marina

Mozart Adagio

Reading: Anne St-Laurent Bezrukova

Rilke: As once the wingéd energy of delight

As once the wingéd energy of delight
carried you over childhood's dark abysses,
now beyond your own life, build the great
arc of unimagined bridges.

Wonders happen when we succeed
in passing through the harshest danger;
but only in a bright and purely granted
achievement do we realize the wonder.

Take your practiced powers and stretch them out
until they span the chasm between two
contradictions... For the God
wants to know himself in you.

Eulogy: Patrick Stuart

Paul Charpentier, 1940-2012

Higher forces have marvelous ways of showing us who we really are.

Paul Charpentier was born in 1940 in a place called Nanaimo on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. Nanaimo sits amongst huge Douglas fir trees, with a rain forest nearby. Paul grew up loving trees and the forest. Throughout his life, he built things with wood. When Robert heard that Paul had come to Apollo, back in the beginning, he said, "Charpentier, yes, Carpenter, he can work in the Woodshop."

Paul's father was the owner of a country store in the tiny town of Pascal. The store was a trading post out of the days of the Wild West. Most of the customers were Cree Indians, very much in essence: they lived in tents and travelled by wagon in summer and by sleigh in winter. They still hunted, and traded store goods for furs, mink and fox.

Paul wrote: "I was brought up in a peaceful, rural, Roman Catholic environment and I learned to love God and found Him among the Cree. Simplicity and essence were their key characteristics. As life became more complex, both in my professional and personal life, I always felt I was guided to look for the simplicity these people exemplified and to apply common sense as a guiding principle."

Growing up in Pascal, Paul remembered long hikes in the woods, alone or with friends. Travelling by bicycle along trails with the sun filtering through the trees and leaves. The faster you went, the quicker the changes in impressions... Playing hockey in the winter on the frozen river; digging a hole in the ice to flood an area for skating; cutting branches from the trees for hockey sticks.

Paul finished high school and then went on to a B.A. in Humanities. He perfected his English during this time - most of us do not know that Paul's first language was French. His family, all Catholic, wanted him to become a priest, and he toyed with the idea, but decided on teaching instead, and took a place at a university in Quebec on a Bachelor of Education course.

During this time, Paul went on a scholarship program to Stratford. This would be Paul's first experience of European impressions and would nourish him for the next 25 years, until he found the School.

Paul worked hard as a high school teacher, then realized that teaching was not for him and entered the early world of information technology. His decision was a crossroads. His career took off. He was entirely self-taught, and became a successful programmer in Montreal, settling down to family life.

Then came another crossroads. He divorced, settled his three children and his ex-wife back out west, and moved on with his new partner, Jennifer, and her daughter. He had three more children with his new wife in Montreal, and his family responsibilities extended from one coastline to the other.

A series of shocks propelled him in the direction of the school. His life was continual turmoil. After thirty years with computers, he found the work too dehumanizing to continue. He had two families to support. And then he lost much of his savings in a stock market crash.

Finally, he found the School, joining in 1988. Shortly after joining, he made a round-the-world trip, meeting students in many different countries. Over the years, he directed centers in Toronto, Montreal, and Novosibirsk, eventually moving to Apollo, where he spent many fruitful years, together with his beloved wife Galina.

On first visiting Apollo, Paul knew he needed to live here. Already experienced in continual re-invention of his life and career, Paul found himself again without the necessities for life at Apollo, only the desire to be here. And – of course -- things worked out. He found his way, as anyone with true desire will do. His connection to Robert became deeper and more personal.

Paul understood to a sublime degree that without material means, his was a life of wealth. Like his purest moments with the Cree Indians of his youth, he embraced a life of cheerful poverty. The epitome of inconspicuous service, Paul asked nothing for himself and continually offered himself to the needs of others. Those closest to him were thoughtful before asking anything from him, for they knew the answer was always “yes”, regardless of the inconvenience it would cause to Paul personally.

When asked what was the most important quality a man number four could possess, Peter Ouspensky replied, “Reliability”. Paul was reliable. He was selfless, quiet, gentle, simple, and profoundly grateful: the qualities that comprise the finest moments of life for each of us.

There were many turns and paths, many directions in Paul’s life. Taken as a whole, and seen from our current perspective, his life pointed always in the same direction. In Paul’s last moments, Robert said to him, “This is a stepping stone to the Nameless within.” Paul said, in a whisper, “It is all part of the play.”

As Paul had already deeply understood, “Higher Forces have marvelous ways of showing us who we really are.”

Music: Coral and Marina

Schubert Du bist die Ruh

Reading: Hugh James

Walt Whitman: Darest Thou Now Soul

Darest thou now O soul,
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,

All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Minister's Conclusion:

At his passing, we see Paul's life as a whole, his life's accomplishments, the things touched by his heart and hands. But ultimately, his life cannot be measured by external facts or accomplishments. At death, it is clear that only quiet, unobtrusive presence is truly significant.

Now it is time to bid our friend farewell.

May Paul's example of service inspire us to greater selflessness.

May his commitment to presence strengthen the desire for presence in ourselves.

And may his love deepen our love for one another.

His work is done. Ours is to let him go.

With gratitude, Paul, friend, fellow-traveler and exemplar, We Thank Thee.

At the Cemetery:

Minister's Introduction

Here on this beautiful day and in this blessed place, we return Paul's ashes to the earth. His play on earth is complete; and we release him to his, and our, true home.

Reading: Christopher King

Walt Whitman: Darest Thou Now Soul

Till when the ties loosen,

All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,

Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,

In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,

Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil O soul.

Urn bearer puts urn in the grave.

Minister's Last Invocation

At the last, tenderly,

From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,

From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,

Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;

With the key of softness unlock the locks; with a whisper,

Set open the doors, O soul.

Minister's Conclusion

Minister and company take rose petals to place in grave.

The earth returns to the earth, and a divine spark returns to its divine source. As Rabia said, 'Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity.' The circle of life is complete.

Let us join together in saying farewell to Paul.