

**FUNERAL SERVICE**

FOR

**AGNES KUCHUK**

**(1912 - 2004)**

# Funeral Service for Agnes Kuchuk

## Minister (Colin Lambert): introduction

In loving presence, we gather today to honor and celebrate the life of our dear friend Agnes, and to express our gratitude for having shared the poetry of her life and the beauty of her work.

Always, we will remember her blessed role and, now, we wish to tenderly release her.

Her passing, like that of other dear friends, serves as a reminder that the Gods have bestowed upon us *this* lifetime to embrace and use well, so that our precious selves may emerge. Agnes was a member of the Fellowship for 21 years. She was a good example of how to work with the system in old age. It is more important to die a beautiful person than to be born one. Thank you, Agnes, for achieving this spiritual goal.

Let us stand for a moment of silent presence.

Omar Khayyam wrote:

Come fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
The winter garment of repentance fling:

The bird of time has but a little way to fly

And lo! The bird is on the wing

## Musical Interlude: Zoila Munoz and Veronique Englebert

### Eulogy: (Irina Galvin)

Every friend was Agnes's best friend. She had only best friends.

One remarkable thing about her was that, when she met someone or someone came into her house, she would greet them with "How wonderful to see you. You look beautiful." Of course, everyone, without exception, felt happy after that. She often quoted Plato: "In bringing happiness to others we find our own."

I enjoyed reading poetry with her. I liked her attention to every word, the melody of her voice, and the silence between her words. With all her kindness to people she was very firm in her opinions. Eric Nightingale was her best friend. But if he made any critique of her poems, as being too sweet, or something else, she would defend her choices vigorously.

I remember after one meeting Agnes looked very puzzled. We had tea together and she said to me, "Well, yesterday at the meeting they suggested not to talk about yourself. Not to say T but to say, 'my machine.' Of course, I am speaking about myself pretty often. Well, I will try." Sometimes she succeeded, and sometimes she did not. She told many stories but there were many stories about herself she didn't tell. For example, she never complained about her health. After one night she said, "It was excruciating pain, but now I am my cheerful self again." She always thought more about the people helping her than herself.

To be her best friend was to share small things. I had a passion for goats. I had many stories to tell. Who was my best listener? Agnes. She asked me to repeat them again and again. Remembering, by the way, all their names.

She was an excellent mother. When I said once to Marla, "Marla, you are the best daughter," she answered, "Of course, because I have the best mother." This summer when Marla was away, I asked some detail about Marla's activities in some town in Europe. Agnes smiled, saying, "You know, I do not know exactly what she is doing. Indeed, we speak often, but what we say is I love you." Just before her death, she said, "My children are my angels."

She did not like to speak about death, really. She would say, "Death is when time comes, curtains close." Not long ago, she said, "Well, I do not feel that I lived these 92 years, but I did live them. After all, I am 92, so I cannot complain." In her last days she started to use more an image of flight than of death. When Robert visited her she received an Armenian poem that was translated by Tarkovsky:

Let toil stoop me,

Years of struggle will not count,

But only in the hour of flight Not weighty be, not

weighty be.

Agnes was light when she made her flight. August meteorites welcomed her into the golden night. With clarity she lived and graciously. Slowly she gave her life back, sending love to the Teacher, caring for her family, wishing well to all friends. A few days before her death, she said, “Friends—they are the most important possession.” Agnes, you are an Immortal Grace. Your presence lingers.

### Reading: John Graham

From *Walt Whitman's* Miracles

WHY! who makes much of a miracle?

As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles.

Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,

Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,

Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,

Or stand under trees in the woods,

Or talk by day with any one I love—or sleep in the bed at night with any one I love. Or sit at table at dinner with my mother.

Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car.

Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive, of a summer forenoon.

Or animals feeding in the fields.

Or birds—or the wonderfulness of insects in the air.

Or the wonderfulness of the sun-down—or of stars shining so quiet and bright

Or the exquisite, delicate, thin curve of the new moon in spring;

Or whether I go among those I like best, and that like me best—mechanics, boatmen, farmers,

Or among the savans—or to the soiree—or to the opera.

Or stand a long while looking at the movements of machinery.

Or behold children at their sports.

Or the admirable sight of the perfect old man, or the perfect old woman.

Or the sick in hospitals, or the dead carried to burial.

Or my own eyes and figure in the glass;

These, with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles.

The whole referring—yet each distinct, and in its place.

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle.

Every cubic inch of space is a miracle.

Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same.

Every foot of the interior swarms with the same;

Every spear of grass—the frames, limbs, organs, of men and women, and all that concerns them. All these to me are

unspeakably perfect miracles.

To me the sea is a continual miracle;

The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—the ships, with men in them.

What stranger miracles are there?

### **Musical Interlude: Yael Ronen and Galina Kulyaeva Reading: Eric Nightingale**

*From Peter Ouspensky's Poems of Sacrifice, original translation by Agnes Kuchuk*

There is no death, but there is transfiguration, for only in transfiguration is possible complete truth-knowing, which reunites the part with the whole—the creation with the creator—and imparts the beatitude of eternal love, the providence of the immortal soul forever and ever.

### **Minister (Colin Lambert): Close**

In Psalms 90 it is written:

We spend our years as a tale *that is told*.

The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

So teach *us* to number our days,  
that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom

Although Agnes is no longer with us on Earth, her influence continues. Her pure love of poetry and music continually resonated throughout her life, as she achieved—and held—the highest notes in her pure song of existence. Her love of the work reminds us to seek the highest within ourselves as we each strive to use the time we have left to seek that vital yet elusive thread of self-remembering that connects us, moment to moment, to the immortal Gods.

May we each succeed in the transformation of our loss, and gain, thereby, the sacred state of acceptance.

*[Minister escorts the family members out of the Prytaneion for the cemetery.]*

### **Minister (Colin Lambert): Interment**

*Reading: Genesis 2:7*

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

*[Marla places the urn in the ground]*

*Reading: Ecclesiastes 12:7*

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

*[The Minister sprinkles a handful of rose petals over the urn and offers the basket for the family to do the same.]*

### **Musical Interlude: Fabio on recorder**

### **Minister (Colin Lambert): Conclusion**

*Reading: Last Invocation from Walt Whitman 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!

Tenderly! Be not impatient!  
(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh!  
Strong is your hold, O love.)

Let us go now, in presence, so that we may continue to honor our dear friend and celebrate the gift of life that the Gods have yet allotted to each of us.

Miracles by Walt Whitman

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Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,  
Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,

Or stand under trees in the woods,  
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Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,  
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive, of a summer forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
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Or whether I go among those I like best, and that like me best—mechanics, boatmen, farmers,  
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