

[Minister Graylin Ross's Introduction]

Dear Friends, we have gathered early on this late summer day to honor and celebrate the life of our beloved friend, Sonia Martinez Zarookian. It cannot be ignored that these are unusual times. We find ourselves having to say farewell to our friend in ways we could never have imagined, but our love is not shaken, nor is our devotion. Our dear Teacher tells us, regarding this pandemic, that this must be necessary or Higher Forces would not do this. We send our love to Sonia, either in person or from afar, and thank her greatly for sharing her youthful, childlike essence-presence with us.

Let us stand and honor our dear friend, Sonia, with our silent presence.

[Silence]

Thank you. Please be seated.

Sonia's return to the source of creation is a fate that we all share. Robert teaches us that ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared, having fully received the presence allotted to them in this life.

[Reading: *In Your Light*, by Rumi]

(Reader: Candice Goldman)

In your light I learn how to love.
In your beauty,
how to make poems.

You dance inside my chest
where no-one sees you,
but sometimes I do,
and that sight becomes this art.

[Music: *Gnossienes no. 1*, Eric Satie]

(Musicians: Marina Swales, Yoshie Muratani, and Diana Yudina)

[Eulogy]

(Reader: Gail Matthews)

Sonia Brambilla was born on January 19, 1964, in a humble part of Tijuana called El Libertad which means Freedom. Sonia grew up the youngest in a large family of 4 sisters and 4 brothers. There is a wonderful black and white photo of all nine children with little Sonia, only seven years old, sitting next to her mother. Even at that time it was clear that she had a special destiny which was like a shining star in comparison to all the rest. *Yes, she definitely was the beautiful duckling.*

She came from two parents whose stories sound like rich Mexican folklore. Her father was a rough and macho ranchero type and her mother a refined lady from a rich family in Guadalajara. The story goes that he came riding on a white horse and kidnapped her when her parents weren't around, saying, "Either you come with me willingly, or I'll just take you." Oh, Mexican romance! Although Sonia had both of her parents' qualities in her, we know that she mainly took after her mother and they were very close throughout their

lives.

Sonia felt the influence of Gods in her life starting from a very young age, with her oldest brother and then very soon after her father both dying of cancer when she was only 12. This was a strong shock for such a sensitive young girl. Partly to distance herself from these shocks but also anxious to begin her own independent journey, this beautiful already womanly looking girl at the tender age of 15 decided to marry...

Few here know that one of Sonia's passions was horse-racing. When she was a girl she would go with her father to *Agua Caliente*, a beautiful racetrack in Tijuana. As soon as she was old enough she would go by bus to the races by herself! Sonia loved the racetrack, and she loved the horses.

And that is where Sonia met and fell in love with Enrique Martinez, a successful horse trainer. They married. They had a child. That child is in this room with us today, Maressa. And at the birth of her daughter, Sonia began her 34-year long love journey with one of her greatest treasures.

Being brought up Catholic, Sonia was touched deeply by the life and words of Christ. Although she didn't attend church on a regular basis she did enrich herself at times with visits to the neighborhood church by herself. There's a fairy-tale like story that before her father built their new home of cinder blocks, they were living practically across the street from the church in a very poor and rundown apartment where people would just leave their trash in the common courtyard. One day her mother suddenly said that someone had stolen a ring of hers and for some reason, the family placed the blame on little Sonia. Her father threatened that if she didn't give it back, he would beat her. Sonia began looking all over for it. Finally she simply asked Jesus where it was. She walked toward the heap of trash, guided by a beam of light shining on it, and found the ring.

Of all the conscious beings helping her, Sonia felt especially close to Christ, Lincoln, William Blake and of course, Robert. By coincidence, not far from El Libertad there is a large statue of Lincoln in the middle of a small roundabout where he is holding a chain that he broke.

Sonia never liked reading much. Regarding most books, studies, and sometimes even people, she would often say, "It's too intellectual; I don't like it." But when her psychologist, who is a student, decided she was finally ready to receive Robert's book, *Self Remembering*, Sonia eagerly read it and knew that she had found what she needed. She intuitively felt that she and her new teacher spoke and understood the same language.

Sonia was one of the original members of the Tijuana Center. She would sacrifice spending time with her mother and Maressa to, as her mother would say, 'go to school' countless times for the next 7 years, with as many as 5 or 6 events every week, which is not an easy effort to make in Mexico. After being in the school just one year, Sonia made her first trip to Apollo.

Sonia moved to Apollo 16 years ago in August and immediately felt that Apollo d'Oro was the place for her to make her countless third line efforts. She started as a Maitre D' working closely with Giovanni for 3 years, but never quite felt that serving the school in that way was in her essence. So when the opportunity came to move to the kitchen, she was happy to make that service her home. This became her new life—working closely with her closest friends, Taka, Alicia, Herve, Ulrich, Rafael, Maressa and others daily for the next 12 years.

And Sonia was an excellent chef! She made delicious fish tacos and wonderful tortillas soup! She loved investigating good restaurants in order to bring fresh food ideas back to Apollo d'Oro. But the best she gave to

Apollo d'Oro and to other students was her cheerful presence, so full of joy and love for life, and her friends. Alicia tells us she was funny, light, like a hummingbird, and a wonderful friend.

It cannot go unmentioned that Sonia had her own classy style, but always with a special flair—perhaps an outfit with a matching beret sitting rakishly on top of her head, just for fun. Or like her sunshine-colored Volkswagen Beetle with eyelashes. Funny, cheerful, childlike. It made us smile. She was a transformative force, and always missed whenever she went away, and now will be missed sorely.

But mostly when we think of Sonia, we think of the loves of her life: About Robert, our Teacher, who she felt shy around, but whom she loved and respected dearly, and Adam, her beloved husband. And her beautiful daughter, Maressa. They were friends in the most real sense. Her mother did her best to help Maressa along her way into the school. Through the example of her blossoming being she showed Maressa what transformation was possible. Maressa said of her mother that she was her best friend, one who supported her, accepted her completely, and understood her very well. One of Maressa's most touching memories of her mother is from when, already after a few chemo therapies, she arrived early at Apollo d'Oro to help Maressa make her famous tortilla soup. She opened the door and said, "I came to rescue my princess!"

With the beginning of this new decade, the gods accelerated Sonia's pace. For the next 7 months, they reminded her daily and repeatedly during her many doctor's visits and eventual hospital stays, that they were serious about this play, that she would not survive it, that she was indeed extremely lucky to have this play, and most important of all, that they Loved her very much. They presented her with countless 911 shocks, which actually is the reverse of her birthdate, 119. And they balanced those chilling shocks with equal amounts of caring and positive 7/11s, 77s, 777s, and once upon arriving at the hospital, a 7777 was shown to her.

The pace was at its height during her last 17 days. She needed an ambulance to get to the hospital and stayed for 9 days with no visitors allowed. Robert said that that was so C Influence could finally be alone with her. She needed to establish a passcode for those who would call her to be able to connect to her room. The word she chose was LOVE.

She returned home for her last 8 days and was surrounded by friends and loved ones who took care of her every wish 24 hours a day. This was her story, her fairytale existence. This gentle, cheerful lamb of god, came from love and returned to conscious love, which is our natural home.

When Robert heard of her passing, he quoted Omar Khayyam: "I came like water and like wind I go."

[Music: Gnossienes no. 3, Eric Satie]

(Musicians: Marina Swales, Yoshie Muratani, and Diana Yudina)

[Reading: *I Love You Neither*, by Rumi]

(Reader: James Keahey)

I love you neither with
My heart nor with my mind.

Just in case the heart might
Stop, the mind can forget.

I love you with my soul.
Soul never stops or forgets.

[Minister Ross's Conclusion]

Death, as Goethe tells us, is a “transition from an existence which we know, to another of which we know nothing.” Our dear friend Sonia has passed on to that world of which we know nothing, yet her memory remains in our hearts. As we say farewell to Sonia, let us remember her life as the gift it was, and the promise, from the angels of even greater destiny to come. Every Fellowship student's life at death stands as a testament to the gods and as a demonstration of their divine will on earth.

May Sonia's efforts to support our Teacher and our school in her sweet childlike way guide us toward a higher understanding of service to God.

May her gentle acceptance of the suffering of her play give us the courage to accept our own times of hardship or pain willingly and with grace.

And may the memory of her cheerful presence be for us like a shining star that when once brought into being will never disappear. Dear Sonia, we thank thee.

[Candle ceremony]

Our body is just a shell, our soul will continue.

[Extinguish and light candles]

[Urn is lifted and members are motioned to stand. Urn-bearer leads the procession.]

At the Cemetery:

[Minister Ross's Introduction]

Here in this sacred place, consecrated by those here present and those who lay here, we release Sonia to her and our true home.

[Poem: *The Path of Love*, by Fariduddin Attar]

(Reader: Rebecca George)

The path of Love is without end;
If you value life then stay away.

If you give your life, then learn,
A thousand are given in return.

He who shies away and saves his life
Shall be forever regretful of his fate.

Love of the Beloved enters my heart,
Announces that tonight is the night.

If your heart is annihilated for your Beloved,
Then peace is being restless and distraught.

Your first step in the field of Love
Is to be slain or reach the cross!

And then you will be burnt, so you can see
That the light of Love shines in the fire's heart.

And when you become ashes and dust,
Then you will dance reflected by the Sun.

[Music: Minuet in D minor & G major , J.S. Bach]
(Musicians: Yoshie Muratani and Diana Yudina)

We return Sonia's ashes to the ground; from earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we look toward eternal life.

[Urn bearer puts urn in the grave]

[Minister Ross's Conclusion:]

Rabia said, "Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity." The inner divine flame returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. We part, only that we may meet again.

[Minister guides funeral party in placing rose petals into grave]