

*In Memoriam—Lela Skoro*

*John 11:25-26 (Job 19:23-27; Revelation 21:1-7)*

*Potter Funeral Chapel – Emmett, Idaho*

*July 14<sup>th</sup> Anno Domini 2008*

+In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit+

Dearly beloved of Lela, honored friends, and guests: Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The text for the homily this day is the Word of our Lord from the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of St John:

*I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.*

Thus far the words of Jesus.

For many, a main source of comfort at the funeral of one who had suffered, or was extremely ill, or was quite aged, is that at least now the deceased is in a better place. There is no more suffering, the aches and pains are gone, and the loved one is at peace. This is most certainly true for those who depart in the Christian Faith, for blessed are those who die in the Lord. They rest from their labors. They have finished the race and have obtained the prize. Above all, they have received the crown of life and dwell forever in the unveiled, glorious presence of Almighty God.

Lela has been called from this world to her heavenly home. She has died in the flesh, for the wages of sin is death. But the body here before us is not just a reminder of death. No—the body you see before you is also an objection lesson for the most joyful and certain Christian hope: the Resurrection of all flesh. This body, dear friends, will rise again. It will be reunited with Lela's soul on the Last Day. And in the new heavens and the new earth, she will suffer no more in the body. Never again will that body be plagued by the ravages of age, or sickness, or Alzheimer's. The first heaven and earth will have passed away, and God will have wiped away every tear and removed all sorrow.

Until then, this body will return to the dust from which it came. Like the seed that cannot grow unless it dies, so as to sprout forth, so also is this

body placed in the ground. It will rest and wait for the Day of the Lord, when it will be called forth again. And though we see a body before us that has been without life since July 8th, 2008, that was not the date on which Lela died. No, she died on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1922. On that day, she was buried with Christ through her Baptism into death and raised again. Her sinful nature was crucified with her Savior. She was washed in His blood—the blood of the Lamb without blemish—and she was clothed in the immaculate white robes of His righteousness.

Fourteen years later, on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937, Lela confessed publicly the faith given to her in her baptism. She confessed her belief in the holy Christian Church, the Communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Lela, as a child of God and heir of His kingdom, believed in these things that her Savior Jesus promised to her. In our reading this day from the Gospel of St John, Jesus said to Martha, upon the death of her brother Lazarus, *I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.* Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. And because He rose again, so also will Lela, and so will we.

Jesus does not just foretell a resurrection of the end times. He is the Resurrection. This sacred truth was on Lela's lips throughout her lifetime, every time she was in the Lord's house for the Divine Service. Every time she gathered with her fellow Christians, many of whom are still here today and bear witness to this, she confessed in the Creed, *I believe in the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting. Amen.* Lela would then approach the altar of her Lord, and receive the Resurrection and the Life in the very Body and Blood of Jesus in her Lord's Supper. There she received the forgiveness of her sins and the strengthening of faith.

There eventually came a time when being present in the Lord's house to receive His gifts of grace was no longer possible for Lela. She would bear the cross of illness to the extent that she needed constant care. It even reached a point that communication was difficult, if not impossible. But all things are possible with God, and He did not forget her. While many may have wondered, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Lela's Lord never abandoned her. And last Tuesday, she attained the number of days on this

earth that God had appointed for her from all eternity, and He brought her home to Himself.

Lela was first resurrected over eighty-five years ago in the waters of her baptism. Last Tuesday she was raised forever from this world of pain and sorrow. And on the last day, when all of the graves are opened, she and all those who are asleep shall rise to be reunited with their bodies to live forever in the presence of God. Lela and all the saints will be united with Jesus Christ. They will know him, but all who have departed in the Faith will rise again and know one another. Lela knows her loved ones who preceded her, and those who die in the Lord from henceforth will see her again.

For now, dear friends, sorrow not as those who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For the Lamb has been sacrificed. Christ Jesus died to atone for your sins, as well, and He was raised again for your justification. In His innocent suffering and death, Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world—Lela's, yours, and mine. In His glorious Resurrection on Easter morning, He forever conquered death and the grave. We may therefore, on a day and occasion such as this, say with full confidence and boldness, *O Death, where is your victory? O Grave, where is your sting?*

For Christ Jesus has won the final victory. Death, the last enemy, has been defeated. And Lela is not dead. She lives, for her Redeemer lives. Christ is risen, and will never die again. And on the Last Day, Lela, in her flesh, shall see God. She will dwell forever in the New Jerusalem—the Holy City in which tears and sorrow will never find a place.

Jesus has won all of this for you, dear hearers in Christ. He died for you and rose again that you might live. And He is coming back. Death has not won. It has been conquered forever. The Lord Jesus will return for those who are His. It is not too late. Confess your sins. Receive His forgiveness. Be fed and strengthened by His gifts. Confess Jesus Christ as Lord. This was Lela's confession. May it be yours as well, that on the Last Day, you may be raised again unto life everlasting.

In +Jesus' Name. Amen.