

Mission Talk (Paul & Martha Sharkey)
Death & What it means to me...

MARTHA

Every single morning, she is there. She's with me when I wake up. Thoughts of her come to me at different times throughout the day.

She was with us for 2 weeks...our "stronger" twin, twin B, Mary, who weighed 1lb. 4oz. compared to her sister who weighed only 1lb. 2oz. when they were born at just 23 weeks & 5 days on November 14, 2010. She opened her eyes first. She had the better start in life...and then she passed away in our arms at 2:15pm on Sunday, November 28 the weekend after Thanksgiving. We knew her time with us was limited. She had been very sick for the past few days.

As a parent who has lost a child, the hole in my heart never seems to heal. I can feel the small hole that was left the day our Mary Gladys passed away. We believe she earned her angel wings that day. And, while we believe she is watching over us, days still present difficult moments even seven years into this journey.

Good evening, I am Martha Sharkey. My husband, Paul, and I have been members of Our Mother of Consolation since 2007. We have three daughters – 7-year-old Claire, 2-year-old Martha Rose, and our daughter in heaven, Mary. I shared the thoughts above with my husband a few months ago before we knew we would be here with you all tonight.

Tonight, I'd like to share that Death and what it means to me is that even through those difficult moments over the past seven years, you don't have to say, "I'm sorry" to me when I tell you how many children I have. I am grateful when you ask me questions about our sweet Mary, when you ask me how we celebrate her short but impactful life. Or when you simply say "Thank you for sharing her with me." I love to have the opportunity to share her name and her story.

I will tell you that we talk about her to her sisters on a regular basis. I may share with you a sweet memory of a visit the cemetery to place pink roses at her gravestone on her birthday or my dear friend's family tradition of placing a grave blanket on her gravestone at Christmas. She may not be here with me, but the memories of holding her, reading to her, praying for her, and celebrating her life are always fresh in my heart and mind. For you to ask me about her means so much to me.

PAUL

Good evening, I'm Paul Sharkey. I am honored and grateful to share with you our thoughts on "death and what it means to us." Being Irish Catholic prepares you well for death in a number of ways. As a young boy, I remember my Mom reminding my brothers and me often "that we are all born to die". However, nothing could prepare us for Sunday, November 28, 2010, when we had to say good-bye to our baby girl.

Before arriving at the hospital, we came to Mass at OMC. Not many parishioners knew what we were going through that morning. Out of the blue, one of the ushers asked us to take up the gifts for the Offertory.

This simple outreach, this small ask to serve, brought such PEACE to Martha and me. In this moment, we knew we were safe, we felt the presence of God, and we knew Mary would enter a new resurrected life with Jesus Christ.

In addition to “we are all born to die”, I also remember being told by parents, families, and Catholic educators, “when God gives you lemons, make lemonade”.

For Martha and me, we have not taken the loss of Mary and hidden it away. We have taken our lemons and made lemonade. We started a non-profit in 2014, Today is a Good Day, which helps families with premature babies navigate the neo-natal intensive care unit. We started the organization in honor of Claire who survived and in memory of Mary.

Mary lives in our hearts, in the mission of Today is a Good Day and helps Martha and me to live out our parish mission to be the “presence of Christ in our world”.

Like us, each of you has experienced loss. Do not hide it away. I encourage you to share it with this community. Allow OMC to help you grieve and to help you heal. It has helped us immensely over the past 7 years.