

# Offered for the Eternal Salvation of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, of the Deceased Members of the Carroll Family, and of all the Faithful Departed

Camilla and Steve, brother priests and deacons, and dear friends,

## Introduction

What a privilege it is for us to be here at Saint Mary's Church at Doughoregan Manor for this Mass for the eternal salvation of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, of the deceased members of the Carroll Family, and of all the Faithful Departed. I'm grateful to all of you for being here, and also to the *schola cantorum* of Mount St. Mary's Seminary, for the music which helps us to lift our minds and hearts to God.

## May the Souls of all the Faithful Departed ...

As the days get shorter and the air gets colder, as the trees burst forth in color and then shed their leaves, and as nature itself hints at the end of all things temporal, the month of November is set aside by the Church for all of us to think of and to pray for the faithful departed, those we have known and loved, who have now gone before us into eternity.

Today we remember at God's altar a very distinguished son of our Nation, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, whose mortal remains rest in this chapel. He was, as you know, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, and also its longest lived and last surviving signer. His death at the age of 95 occurred on November 14, 1832, some 181 years ago this month.

On this day, also, how could we fail to remember in our prayers and in this Mass the soul of President John F. Kennedy, assassinated in Dallas 50 years ago today. Indeed, as Richard Cardinal Cushing prayed at President Kennedy's Funeral Mass,

“He was sealed with the seal of the Holy Trinity in Baptism. He believed in the Triune God. And therefore, the Church confidently hopes for mercy from the same all-loving God.”

The Funeral Rites of President Kennedy transfixed the nation, as his Funeral Mass, celebrated by Cardinal Cushing at St. Matthew’s Cathedral in Washington, was televised to the nation and to the world.

And yet, long before the days of television, the Funeral Rites of Charles Carroll of Carrollton were carried out with great solemnity, too, in very similar liturgical rites. Indeed, his funeral Mass was celebrated three days after his death, at the Basilica of the Assumption in Baltimore by Archbishop James Whitfield. The homilist for the Funeral Mass was the priest who would succeed him as Archbishop of Baltimore, Samuel Eccleston. After Mass, the funeral procession departed the Basilica at 12:30 in the afternoon, and reached Doughoregan Manor at 4:30 that evening, through four hours of constant rain. Then, as the notes of one of the priests present that day attest, “Mr. Carroll was buried in a vault he himself had prepared under the spot where he used to pray in his chapel, on the Gospel side, near the altar.”

### **Sanguinem Super Nos**

Here in this same chapel, we can imagine the figure of Charles Carroll of Carrollton kneeling in prayer above where his body now lies. Undoubtedly, he would have faced the Altar and, specifically, the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. Here, in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence must have prayed for himself, for his family, and for his fledgling nation. How much solace he must have found here, in the very presence of the Prince of Peace.

Indeed, this same Altar and that same Lord bring us back here tonight, just as they brought Charles Carroll of Carrollton into this chapel so often. On my previous visits to Doughoregan, I have marveled at the historic richness of the entire Manor, so lovingly and painstakingly restored by Camilla and Steve.

The first time I visited this chapel, one of the things I noticed was the exquisite set of enamel Stations of the Cross. In the first station, back near the front door, one of the onlookers as Christ is condemned to death holds a sign that reads, “Sanguinem

super nos.” “May his blood be upon us.” What sounds to us awfully ominous (and was intended to be such at the time of Christ’s death) is seen by us, in the light of faith, quite differently.

Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, that “[the Blood of Jesus] does not cry out for vengeance and punishment; it brings reconciliation. It is not poured out *against* anyone; it is poured out *for* many...” He continues, “...read in the light of faith, [this] means that we all stand in need of the purifying power of love which is [Christ’s] blood. These words are not a curse, but rather redemption [and] salvation.”

### **Follow Me**

Indeed, this is why we are here tonight. Whenever the Mass is celebrated, the very Body and Blood of Christ are made present on the altar through the words of a priest and the action of the Holy Spirit. So tonight, this, the most perfect and powerful prayer possible, the Mass, is offered for the eternal salvation of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, for the deceased members of the Carroll Family, and for all the Faithful Departed. In that intention I include the deceased family members & friends of all here present. What’s more, for this Mass I will use a chalice which was once used by Archbishop John Carroll himself, as indeed I am vested with Archbishop Carroll’s pectoral cross.

All these things speak very powerfully of the *tangibility* of the Catholic Faith. *This* is the chalice and *this* is the pectoral cross of the *real person*, from *this* family who still live in this house, on whose shoulders rested the growth and the increase of the Catholic Faith in this nation. *This* is the chapel and *this* is the tomb of the only son of the Catholic Church who risked his life and freedom and property to sign his name to a document so that he and his descendants would be free to practice their religion in peace.

If you were to go to Rome and into the excavations beneath St. Peter’s Basilica, you would see the *actual* bones of the fisherman from Bethsaida in Galilee who heard the voice of Jesus himself say “Follow me.” His response changed the course of the history of the world.

Real people, with real decisions, with real consequences, all made possible by the

gift of courage, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The natural virtue of courage, after all, enables us to do what is very difficult. The supernatural gift of courage enables us to do what is otherwise impossible.

## **Conclusion**

Dear friends, we now turn to the Altar, the same Altar to which Charles Carroll of Carrollton turned so often. Soon the Lord Jesus will make himself present on the altar: the one who came from Heaven to earth, so that he might take us from earth to Heaven.

As we pray for the eternal salvation of those who have gone before us, we pray also for ourselves, and for those we love, that the grace of God will be victorious in us, and bring us safely to everlasting life.

Indeed, in the immortal words of Blessed John Henry Newman, we pray: May He  
support us all the day long,  
till the shadows lengthen  
and the evening comes,  
and the busy world is hushed,  
and the fever of life is over,  
and our work is done.  
Then in His mercy  
may He give us a safe lodging,  
and a holy rest  
and peace, at last."

Amen.