

## **Eulogy of Seth L. Hanson**



**Delivered by Michael J. Gray  
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Thank you, Pastor John, for reminding us that Seth's self-image was, more than anything, that of a sinner saved by grace. I couldn't help noticing however, that just as you were saying that, a beam of light came through the window and shone right through the picture of him up here; beaming right through the very center his face. I nudged my wife Nancy to look, and she had already noticed. I can't help thinking what a great sign that was to remind us of our hope that this sinner, saved by grace, is, God willing, a sinner no more. That he is now perfectly sinless. This is the hope left us by our Redeemer. I thank you as well for that reminder for each of us. With that, I introduce myself to all of you as a sinner saved by grace, and I thank you for asking me, a sinner, to speak here before you about my departed friend whom I love.

Good morning. My name is Michael Gray. Seth and I worked together for the past 10 years. We met while Seth was consulting with Thermo Fisher Scientific, where I managed his consultancy, and then he came on board and helped me do a startup with Actus Analytical 5 years ago. When I posted to my FB and LinkedIn accounts that he had passed, the word "mentor" came back again and again. He was professionally brilliant, and open – even anxious – to share his professional experience for everyone's benefit. But you all know that about him already. I'll come back to his mentoring in a moment and describe how I believe this mentoring was the first of a three-fold expression of Seth's faith, but first, let's reflect for a moment on our Lord's three-fold *nature*. I firmly believe that Seth knew exactly what he was doing, and that his plan of living out his faith was rooted in a deep understanding of his God, despite how simple and homespun it may have appeared. I bet most of you are thinking right now, "yup, that's was totally Seth's M.O.!"

We Christians are so blessed that the Lord revealed Himself to us to help us in our journey. But, what did He say of Himself? He speaks of His three-part nature, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While there's so much **mystery** in the Trinity, Jesus gave us all that we need to understand that mystery, as much as our present nature allows. He spoke of His Father, the first person of the Trinity as being a father, a leader, and the source of power. It is "from the Father" that He came and "entered the world", and said He was "leaving the world and going to back the Father" (cf. Jn 16:28). He defers to the Father's will when he says, "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father" (cf. Jn 14:31). He spoke of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, our advocate, as being here perpetually to carry out God's work. The Holy Spirit, says Jesus, "dwells with you, and shall be *in* you" (cf. Jn 14:17) Finally, He refers to himself as the person of the Triune God whose humanity, His hypostatic union "brings it all together" in a manner of speaking, when he says that He is "the way the truth and the life. No one goes to the Father except through me" (cf. Jn 14:6)

For this reason, it's natural to think in a three-part way when we ponder our faith. Clearly, our Lord **made** this natural, as we can see in the pre-Christian Greek philosophers whose trinitarian thinking on metaphysics was integrated into Christian revelation by St. Augustine. In fact, *their* concept of trinitarian metaphysics informed the Christian understanding of The Christ for more than three centuries *before* God's Word was formed into what we now call The Bible, and the codification, at Nicaea, of what we now call "The Holy Trinity". The Trinity might be the most fundamental concept our Lord bestowed upon us with His revelation. While there are many ways to slice and dice the exegesis, God as Holy Spirit and Father are each mentioned hundreds of times in the New Testament alone, by Jesus and St. Paul.

Legend has it that St. *Patrick* taught the Trinity with a shamrock; using its three leaves as props. With that, I offer you this meditation on a three-part approach to the lived-faith of my beloved brother, Seth. It is a great model of Christian witness!

There was the social, or communal dimension, where Seth lifted those around him in any way he could. For God's glory for sure, but subtly, following the teaching of St. Francis that we should, "preach the Gospel at all times and, when necessary, use words." The next dimension narrowed to his more interpersonal relationships where Christianity was openly part of the conversation. Finally, there was his personal relationship with *his* Lord and Savior. I was invited to witness this in his final days, and it left me in awe. For all that Seth did to teach and mentor me professionally, our relationship was so much more. We loved each other *in Christ*, where we were *not* leader and follower, teacher and student, but brother-to-brother, basking in one another's highest moments of faith. I'd like to share with you a few thoughts on how I saw my brother Seth living out this most sincere and humble devotion to his God.

For myself and those I'm typically involved with, we saw Seth in the communal dimension; the *first* "leaf of the shamrock", as it were. We experienced the generous sharing of his legendary business acumen and experience. I said that "mentor" is the word we all agreed described Seth. A mentor is not merely a trainer or teacher. A mentor relationship is at a higher level and requires something more. For Seth, that something more was Christ. Whether or not

his *mentees* knew it specifically at the beginning of the relationship, they would soon come to see that that “something more” was a higher purpose. I so often think of Seth as the quintessential example of what President Reagan was imploring us when he said, “There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don’t care who gets the credit.” Seth didn’t hide his knowledge nor dispense it miserly. No. And when offering to take on my son Declan as his latest mentee, he said to me, “Michael, I have all this knowledge that God graced me to acquire in this amazing life, and I need to hand it off to someone.” He didn’t expect anything in return.

But, what did *our Lord* teach us about giving of ourselves? I couldn’t think of a better, simpler example than what He said as recorded by St. Luke: “Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, shall be poured into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again” (cf. Lk 6:38) How did Seth read this; what was his example? Anyone fortunate enough to work with him knew the answer. Whether they made the connection that they were being evangelized is a question of how open their hearts were: if they were paying attention however, they were seeing the work of the Holy Spirit.

How did Seth find his humility? How can we teach people to *follow President Reagan’s* directive of foregoing all the credit? The obvious answer – and it was Seth’s answer – is that to accomplish without limits, all must be done **not** for **anyone’s** “worldly credit”, but only for God’s glory!

The second leaf of the shamrock was manifest in Seth’s specifically interpersonal relations. This is where he spoke of his beliefs much more directly. For he and I, these were conversations late at night and early in the morning, at our dining room table. I would come home from Mass each morning just after 7:30 and Seth and I would have that quiet time to share our hearts. And boy did I need it over the past 18 months!

For those of you who don’t know our family, Nancy Declan and me, we tragically suffered the passing of our beloved daughter and sister, Amanda, last year. Truly, if *our* faith was “the size of a mustard seed”, we would rejoice that one of our own is already with the Lord. But our faith is weak in the face of such a tragedy, and we’ve needed, and *received* thanks be to God, all kinds of help in coping. This is what those mornings with Seth were for me. Our Lord said, “By this all men know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another” (cf. Jn 13:35). I’ll tell you a story about how Seth “was known to all men”; it’s a story which epitomizes our dear friend.

When we lost our daughter, it goes without saying that we were devastated. It’s impossible to paint a picture of losing a child that anyone spared of this grief could understand in all its complexity. What you *can easily* understand however, is that the planning of your child’s funeral, when they die suddenly and unexpectedly, is surreal. It’s something of an out-of-body experience, as you plan the service, purchase a casket and secure a burial site. Imagine doing this just 5 days after you were celebrating how well this child was doing?

Well, Seth could imagine. Throughout that period and the subsequent months, Seth was there for all the little things. Every time I looked, there was Seth doing those little things: taking out the garbage, setting up the tables, and going into my tools to get what he needed to fix the handrail for the basement steps which had come loose. There were big things too. He took care of the business. Leading Declan, until I could get back on my feet. He knew what Nancy and I needed, so that we could put all our energy into prayer and getting close the Father. Thanks to Seth, and many others for sure, we were able to let go and throw ourselves into the arms of our savior and meditate on His promise of eternal life – now so desperately important in our lives.

Lest, you think that Seth was only acting as “Martha” to us in our grief, you’d need to be at our dining room table in the ensuing months to hear Seth being “Mary” as well (Cf. Lk 10:38-42) Talking about his experiences at the feet of Christ; faith, hope and charity were the subjects. Seth helped me to understand how God’s gifts abounded in this tragedy and, if we listened carefully, the Lord would reveal *His* plan to us. So, He has. In fact, I promise each of you here this morning – and I especially make this promise to you Shane – that if you turn to Him, your God, Creator and Savior, in your darkest hour, He’ll fill you with so much love that you’ll come to see that it’s in our *afflictions* our Lord comes to us, but we have to be open to him!

So much a part of that dining room table discussion was the Beatific Vision; that time we’ll spend in the presence of the Lord in eternity. For me as a Catholic, a foretaste of this comes when we eat His body and drink His blood – as He commanded - in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (cf. Jn 52-53). Of course; this is the **true presence** of God; all that’s lacking is our unshed sinful nature which renders **our experience** of this reality imperfect. As a non-Catholic, Seth didn’t practice

this sacramental aspect of Christianity, but such differences never interfered; we agreed whole-heartedly that the Kingdom of God and the Beatific Vision are here and now in *some* form, and the more we humble ourselves and die to sin, the more we can feel His very real presence. We're feeling it right now, aren't we? It's very real folks. Real enough that it's getting *us* through the tragic loss of our daughter and the passing of our beloved Seth.

In case we needed anything more to be convinced of this, let me share the final part of my personal experience with my brother Seth. The third and *final* leaf of the shamrock, was his deeply personal relationship with his God. When it came his time to go home to the *ultimate* Beatific Vision, the one which *is* perfect, and eternal, since we are washed in the blood of the Lamb and perfected, Seth was courageous, humble and faithful. By the last time I visited him, he knew the time was at hand, yet he trusted. Those of you who knew him well, knew his penchant for saying "His love is sufficient!", and thanks to Joyce and Shane for lifting our spirits with that reminder in the obituary. In my last visit with my dear friend, as I was leaving, I made the sign of the cross on his forehead in the way we do in Catholic Mass when we're about to hear the Gospel. We make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips and breast with the silent prayer, "may the words of the Gospel be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart." I'd told Seth about this small act of piety some time ago and he really appreciated it. So, I made the sign on Seth that day, so that he might have the Gospel in *his* mind, on *his* lips and in *his* heart at the time of passing. Thanks to his pastor and his devoted wife Joyce, of whom he often said, "I'm not worthy", he did.

Finally, it was time to leave and I leaned over and said, "Seth, a wiser man than me once said that 'His love is sufficient.'" Unable to really speak since pneumonia had taken hold of his lungs, he gasped out to me in something of a voice, "**more than sufficient**". These words of a dying man waiting for the end, is one of the greatest witnesses of faith I've ever experienced. Of course, it was my friend, mentor and brother in Christ whom I love so deeply.

Thank you, my friend. You're irreplaceable for sure, but what you taught us all is that *each of us* is indeed irreplaceable, but we must remember the admonition of President Reagan not to focus on who gets worldly credit. That it *isn't* about *us*, at all; it's about *His* love and its sufficiency.

God bless Seth as he now achieves the promise; and God bless us all as we continue our struggle *viam inveniam hac lacrimarum vale*, that is to say, to find our way through this valley of tears. In Seth's *words* and how he *lived*, we find the formula; a way to keep us close to our personal Savior. Seth knew just what he was doing and hoped that we would all learn. So. Let's do him the honor of taking the lesson to heart, shall we?

Let me close with some other words of President Reagan: "Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly, leave the rest to God". In other words, "His love is sufficient; ***more*** than sufficient!"

Shalom, pax vobiscum, peace by with you!