

Jim Hughes

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- Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.

It is right that the funeral for Jim Hughes is here at Seattle University, in this Jesuit institution, in a chapel named for the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Jim was deeply devoted to the Jesuits and was their best friend. He had 8 years at the Jesuit Grade School, St. Joe's; 4 years at Seattle Prep, and continued his Jesuit education at Seattle University. He was a Regent of Seattle University, a friend of its Jesuit presidents, and the founder of the Seattle U. Graduates Club. He loved the Jesuit pastor of St. Cecelia; Fr. Emmett Carroll, and was a classmate of Emmett's Jesuit brother, Al Carroll. Jim Hughes received so much from the Jesuits and he gave so much to them in friendship and service. This beautiful Chapel on this Jesuit ground is indeed the right place for the funeral of Jim Hughes. You could almost say his very ground was Jesuit.

The readings his wife of 47 years, Marilee, and his son Rex, chose are expressive of what Jim was all about and a great witness and testimony to all of us gathered here for how to live our own lives.

The first reading speaks of a "time for everything under heaven". I would say that for Jim it was a time for everything and for everyone under heaven. He reached out to everyone, high or low, all through his life, and even in the very last days reaching out to the nurses who cared for him and to their families. He cared for everyone; he wanted to help everyone; he helped them to have jobs and to have better lives. Indeed his time was a time for everyone under heaven. From our reading I would emphasize for him:

- a time to plant
- a time to heal
- a time to build
- a time to laugh
- a time to gather together
- a time to seek the best for others
- a time to keep friends
- a time to speak
- a time to stay in the background
- a time to work for peace
- and a time—above all—to love.

These are the times of the life of Jim Hughes and each of you can fill in how he was your husband, your brother, your father, your friend, your colleague, your labor leader, your companion in faith, and in service. Let's each take a moment to think, and pray, and recall the many times of the life of Jim Hughes and how he enriched the times of our own lives.

The second reading was supposedly written by St. Paul, but I feel it could just as well have been written by Jim Hughes.

- love sincerely
- hate what is evil
- hold to what is good
- love one another
- anticipate one another in showing love
- be fervent in spirit
- serve the Lord
- rejoice in hope
- endure in affliction
- persevere in prayer
- exercise hospitality
- have the same regard for one another
- do not be wise in your own estimation
- be concerned for what is noble
- live at peace with all.

Isn't that indeed the Epistle According to Jim Hughes? His epistle, his letter to us? It is a letter from a great public servant, someone who helped hundreds to find jobs, someone who strategized to boost others into high positions while himself staying behind the scenes, someone who did not run for office but successfully helped others do so, someone who did not seek opportunity for himself but always sought opportunity for others, someone who lifted up the spirits of others, someone at home with all people. There are thousands of people whose lives are better because of this energetic, loyal, genuine, trustworthy, caring, good man. Let us take a moment to listen to the Epistle According to Jim Hughes, servant of all.

The final reading at this funeral for Jim goes to the heart of who Jim was, to his faith and his Catholic practice. Jesus was indeed for him the living bread that came down from heaven, the one from whom Jim drew life, and in whom he remained all his life.

As Jim's son Rex told his father at the very end of his life, his greatest gift to others, above all his service of others, was the gift of faith. He was an active Catholic all of his life, prayed daily, said several rosaries a day in the last years of his life, turned to his faith to find strength in his suffering, especially in his losing of his eyesight when he felt powerless, and in his last years of illness. His Catholic faith was also the foundation of his public service on behalf of the worker. His life's commitment came from Catholic Social Teaching, from the encyclicals of the popes on labor and on the just social order. He always brought his professional life of public service back to his faith. He got his faith from a saintly mother and he lived that faith fully all his life with his sisters, and his wife and son, living almost exactly half his life within parishes in Seattle and the other half of his life in St. Cecilia's on Bainbridge.

In our reading Jesus declares: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever", ... "I will raise him up", ... he will have "eternal life", "he will have life because of me". It is right at a funeral, as we reflect on our own beliefs about life and death, that we honor the faith of the one who has died and let his faith witness to us. Jim's faith was the foundation of his life, the source of his service, his solace in suffering, and his confidence that God would raise him up and bring him to eternal life. Let us allow his faith speak to us, be a

witness, to shine light on our lives. Indeed how good it is to be here in this sacred place to honor this good man, Jim Hughes, and to let his life be a witness to us all.