

**HOMILY BY JOHN C. DANFORTH
AT THE FUNERAL OF THOMAS A. SCHWEICH
CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL AND ST. GEORGE
MARCH 3, 2015**

Blessed are the poor in Spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness.

Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness sake.

Blessed are you when people revile
you and persecute you and utter all kinds
of evil against you on my account. Amen.

Kathy, Emilie, Thomas. We who cared so much for your husband and your dad enfold you in our love, just as our Lord enfolds you and Tom in his love. We want you to know that we are with you to offer whatever strength and comfort we can.

Tom Schweich was an exceptionally able public servant. He graduated from Harvard Law School, and spent most of his career as a trial lawyer, meticulously marshaling facts and mastering the law

in complex litigation involving government contracts.

When Attorney General Reno appointed me Special Counsel to investigate the mass deaths at Waco, Texas, I knew that would be exhaustive work that had to be done with great care, and I enlisted Tom as my Chief of Staff. The investigation lasted 14 months, with scores of witnesses and a million pages of documents. Tom was highly

organized, and on top of every detail of the investigation.

Again, he was my Chief of Staff at the United Nations. Few jobs are as demanding as dealing simultaneously with the State Department and the Secretariat of the U.N., and Tom was adept in managing both people and difficult situations.

Tom stayed at the U.N. in the same capacity with two of my successors, and then fearlessly led the State

Department's war against narcotics, traveling to the heart of danger, holding the rank of Ambassador.

Half a dozen years ago, Tom told me he wanted to run for public office. His first thought was the U.S. Senate but he finally decided on state auditor. He was a person easily hurt and quickly offended, and I told him I didn't think he had the temperament for elective politics, but Tom didn't easily accept advice, and he was offended by mine. It

was his decision, and he was my friend, and I was for him, whatever he chose to do.

He ran, won election, and became universally acknowledged as a great Auditor, zealously uncovering corruption, attacking sloppiness whether of Democrats or Republicans, and praising good work where he saw it. He was so successful that he faced no serious opposition for his second term.

Tom was the model for what a public servant should be. He was exceptionally bright, energetic and well organized. He was highly ethical, and like the indignant prophets of Biblical times, he was passionate about his responsibility for righting wrongs.

We spoke often about the calling to public service, and what we said was always the same. The objective should

be always to take the high ground and never give it up.

I last spoke with Tom this past Tuesday afternoon. He was indignant. He told me he was upset about two things, a radio commercial and a whispering campaign he said were being run against him. He said the commercial made fun of his physical appearance and wondered if he should respond with his own ad.

But while the commercial hurt his feelings, his great complaint was about a whispering campaign that he was Jewish. And that subject took up 90 percent of a long phone call. This was more than an expression of personal hurt as with the radio ad, this was righteous indignation against what he saw as a terrible wrong. And what he saw was wrong is anti-Semitism. He said he must oppose this wrong, that he must confront it publicly by going before the media where he would present several witnesses. He

said that they would verify that there were several times when the rumor had been spread.

Tom called this anti-Semitism, and of course it was. The only reason for going around saying that someone is Jewish is to make political profit from religious bigotry. Someone said this was no different than saying a person is a Presbyterian. Here's how to test the credibility of that remark: when was the last time anyone sidled up to you and

whispered into your ear that such and such a person is a Presbyterian?

Tom told me of his Jewish grandfather who taught him about anti-Semitism, and told him that anytime Tom saw it, he had to confront it. So Tom believed that that was exactly what he must do.

There was no hint by Tom that this was about him or his campaign. It was about confronting bigotry.

I told Tom that it is important to combat any whiff of anti-Semitism, but I

said that he should not be the public face of doing that. I told him that if he were to go public, the story would be all about him, and not about the evil he wanted to fight. I said that I was concerned about his political future, that his focus should be on winning election as governor, and that the best approach would be to have someone feed the story to the press and let the press run with it.

Tom said that the press would only run with the story if he went public, and that

if he didn't make an issue out of anti-Semitism, no one would.

That was the phone call, except at the end he seemed angry with me.

It's impossible to know the thoughts of another person at such a dire time as suicide, but I can tell you what haunts me. I had always told him to take the high ground and never give it up, and he believed that, and it had become his life. Now I had advised him that to win

election he should hope someone else would take up the cause.

He may have thought that I had abandoned him and left him on the high ground, all alone to fight the battle that had to be fought.

I think there are two messages in this, one for Tom's children, the other for the rest of us.

Emilie and Thomas, always be proud of your father. He has left you a legacy, a tradition to take up in your own lives.

You will have to be very brave to do this, as he was brave, and it will require energy and devotion to the task, as he was energetic and devoted to his task. The legacy your father has passed on to you is this: to fight for what is right; to always seize the high ground and never give it up.

The message for the rest of us reflects my own emotion after learning of Tom's death, which has been overwhelming anger that politics has gone so hideously

wrong, and that the death of Tom Schweich is the natural consequence of what politics has become. I believe deep in my heart that it's now our duty, yours and mine, to turn politics into something much better than its now so miserable state.

Sure, politics has always been combative, but what we have just seen is combat of a very different order. It used to be that Labor Day of election years marked the beginning of campaigns.

This campaign for governor started two years in advance of the 2016 election.

And even at this early date, what has been said is worse than anything in my memory, and that's a long memory. I have never experienced an anti-Semitic campaign. Anti-Semitism is always wrong and we can never let it creep into politics.

As for the radio commercial, making fun of someone's physical appearance, calling him a "little bug", there is one

word to describe it: “bullying.” And there is one word to describe the person behind it: “bully.”

We read stories about cyberbullying, and hear of young girls who killed themselves because of it. But what should we expect from children when grown ups are their examples of how bullies behave?

Since Thursday, some good people have said, “Well that’s just politics.” And Tom should have been less sensitive; he should have been tougher, and he should

have been able to take it. Well, that is accepting politics in its present state and that we cannot do. It amounts to blaming the victim, and it creates a new normal, where politics is only for the tough and the crude and the calloused. Indeed, if this is what politics has become, what decent person would want to get into it? We should encourage normal people, yes sensitive people, to seek public office, not drive them away.

There's a principle of law called the thin skull rule. It says that if you hurt someone who is unusually susceptible to injury, you are liable even for the damages you didn't anticipate. The person who caused the injury must pay, not the person with the thin skull. A good rule of law should be a good rule of politics. The bully should get the blame not the victim.

We often hear that words can't hurt you. But that's simply not true. In the

Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said just the opposite. Words for Jesus could be the moral equivalent of murder. He said if we insult a brother or sister we will be liable. He said if we call someone a fool we will be liable to hell. Well how about anti-Semitic whispers? And how about a radio ad that calls someone a “little bug,” and that is run anonymously over and over again?

Words do hurt. Words can kill. That has been proven right here in our home state.

There is no mystery as to why politicians conduct themselves this way. It works. They test how well it works in focus groups and opinion polls. It wins elections, and that is their objective. It's hard to call holding office public service, because the day after the election it's off to the next election, and there's no

interlude for service. It's all about winning, winning at any cost to the opponent or to any sense of common decency.

The campaign that led to the death of Tom Schweich was the low point of politics, and now it's time to turn this around. So let's make Tom's death a turning point here in our state.

Let's decide that what may have been clever politics last week will work no

longer. It will backfire. It will lose elections, not win them.

Let's pledge that we will not put up with any whisper of anti-Semitism. We will stand against it as Americans and because our own faith demands it. We will take the battle Tom wanted to fight as our own cause.

We will see bullies for who they are. We will no longer let them hide behind their anonymous pseudo committees. We will not accept their way as the way of

politics. We will stand up to them and we will defeat them.

This will be our memorial to Tom: that politics as it now exists must end, and we will end it. And we will get in the face of our politicians, and we will tell them that we are fed up, and that we are not going to take this anymore.

If Tom could speak to us, I think he would say about the same thing. To borrow a familiar phrase, he would approve this message. But Tom is at

peace, and it's for us to take up the
cause.

May Tom's soul and the souls of all
the faithful departed rest in peace, and
may light perpetual shine upon them.

Amen.