

MEDITATION DELIVERED AT FUNERAL OF

JAMES R. HUGHES, JUNE 5, 1974

God does not give assurance even to the elect against trouble, suffering, or loss. Too often, people have felt that Christianity was a miracle drug designed miraculously to make life easy without suffering and pain. The purpose of Christianity is not to enable us to avoid difficulty, but it is to produce a character adequate to meet difficulty when it comes. Christianity does not make life easy; rather it tries to make us great enough for life. It does not give us escape from life's burdens, but strength for meeting them when they are borne.

The cross of Christ plainly sets forth two facts: First, that in this world even the innocent are not exempt from suffering; and second, that there is a power able to surmount evil, to rise above tragedy. In the cross God suffered with us; in the cross we have an example of triumph over agony.

When Reverend Clark Poling was about to depart for overseas duty in World War II, he said to his father, "Dad, I don't want you to pray for my return. I have no premonition, but just don't pray for my return -- just pray that I shall never be a coward; Dad, pray that I shall be adequate." The young chaplain proved himself indeed adequate. He was one of four chaplains to go down on the "Dorchester" which sank on February 5, 1943 in the iceberg waters of the North Atlantic as result of enemy action. As his ship was sinking, he gave entire attention to saving the lives of others and even gave away his own life belt to save a fellow passenger. He became one