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## *Words for Kaneez Khanum Bashir*

**A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler  
At the memorial service for Kaneez Khanum Bashir**

Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thank you, Salmoon, and thank you, Mari. And thanks to all of you who gather in this holy place at this holy time. Thanks to all of you who are gathering through video and live streaming, from Pakistan, and from around the world. Grace to you, and peace, from this holy place at this holy time.

This cathedral is holy because we accept all sorts of prayer: the joyful prayer of baptisms and weddings, the regular weekly prayer of Eucharist, and the sad prayer, the laments, of funerals. This place is made holy through prayer, through your prayer.

We gather, even in death, to pray. We gather, even in death, to give thanks. The love that you bring to this cathedral in prayer, makes this cathedral holy.

With Kaneez Khanum Bashir, we pray, "Where can I go from your Spirit? ... Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike."

Kaneez Khanum Bashir was praying that psalm, Psalm 139, all day, the day she died. She was making her life holy, she was sustaining her holy life, she was reminding herself of holiness, with those words. Those are the same words which gather us here today, in this holy place, to remember Kaneez, and to bless her.

This past week, Salmoon, in remembering his mother, told me that she seemed to him to combine the characteristics of both of the famous biblical sisters, Mary and Martha: Mary, who sat listening to Jesus, and Martha who served. What a beautiful image.

We remember that it was Martha who cried to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." But we all know otherwise. Of course he would have died. At some time. All we go down to the dust. And one never knows when death will occur.

In fact, however, death happens all the time! Death occurs in holy communities like this one. Churches, communities of faith, are places of holiness, even in death. When we bless each other during times of change, as death is a change, we are making that transition a holy change. Even in death, we somehow know the holiness of people, we somehow know the holiness of each other. In love, in love, in love, holy communities contain even death.

It occurs to me today, that most of us here in Atlanta here never physically knew Kaneez, except for Salmoon and Mari, who of course knew her. I never met Kaneez, and most of you did not either. But we are here because we know Salmoon. And we know Mari. We are here because we have known the love of Kaneez, through Salmoon, and Mari.

In the mystery of love, we know a lot about Kaneez through her son, Salmoon. Kaneez, like many in this world, is known through her children, and certainly her son, Salmoon. We are here because of the love of Kaneez, known through Salmoon. Thank you, Kaneez, and thank you, Salmoon.

Most of us never physically knew Jesus of Nazareth, either, who walked this earth years ago. But we know his offspring, the children of God, in faith. We are here because we have known the love of Christ through those

who knew him before us. Through others, we know the love of Christ. In the same way, Salmoon shows us his mother, and her love. And so does Mari.

And so will the child that Mari is soon to bear. Blessings on this child. "You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High." Those, of course, are the words that Zechariah sang to his son, John; but they are also the words we sing to all children:

"In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Thank you, Salmoon, for showing us the love of a mother, and for showing us the love of Christ. That love of Christ prepares the way for light and for darkness, too. That love of Christ prepares the way for death, and it also prepares the way for new life.

We gather today in the name of love, and in the name of resurrection. Holy communities, like this Cathedral, proclaim new life and resurrection in the world. Holy people, like Kaneez Khanum Bashir proclaim new life and resurrection. As we gather to remember Kaneez, we gather to remember holiness, and love, and resurrection.

"Now the green blade riseth...  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been.  
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green."

AMEN.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip