Monsignor Quinn, Martha, the Parks family, ladies and gentlemen:

I am Mohamad Jaafar, Chairman of Ophthalmology at Children's National Medical Center. I have been very blessed and honored to have known Dr. Marshall M. Parks. Our relationship started in the Spring of 1984 and will not end on Wednesday, July 27th, it will live for eternity.

Yes, I have been fortunate. Talking about fortune, 4-5 summers ago, we visited my brother in his mountain residence in Lebanon. There were plenty of people, four generations of family and friends, almost all talking at the same time... The bell rang, again: an elderly, shy, village-woman showed at the door and, seeing the crowd, she hesitated to come in. But she had no choice... she was made to. 15-20 minutes later, Turkish coffee was served—that strong coffee with dense mud at the bottom of the demitasse. One of the guests drank her coffee fast, swirled the rest quickly and flipped the cup up side down and asked the village-lady to read her fortune. It's like palm reading! By that time, almost everybody in the room had done the same and was ready to listen. The lady was hugely embarrassed and declined to do so. But, again, it's a democracy, she was outnumbered! She finally agreed to only read my wife's and my fortune, as we were coming from very afar, and the rest would wait to another day... We accepted that folkloric performance. After all, we haven't done that since we were young teenagers!

She told Siwar things that only the two of us knew! Then came my turn. She looked long into my cup, my heart started sinking. Then, finally, she started reading: "you have an older man who really, really, likes you and cares very deeply for you." Naturally, I and everybody else started looking at my father... and she continued describing "a very handsome, tall man, with white hair, NO NO, very very white hair, not in the room, in a different land... People come to him, from near and far, for advice... he is a giant amongst his peers..." She kept going... She described Marshall M. Parks as if she was seeing a video clip of him in that little cup. The room was dead silent... My wife, daughters and I were stunned. She – very accurately – read my fortune! She was/She is right. I have been very fortunate. I know that my story is not very different form that of many in this room. Marshall was the guardian angel of so many of us.

I've learned a lot from this distinguished man. I learned Ophthalmology (except that fornix approach to eye muscle surgery) but also many administrative and teaching skills and life lessons. One of the many things he taught me – taught us – by example, is that generosity is one of his most cherished values: not necessarily sharing your earthly possessions, but your time, expertise, skills, patience, soft touch and smile. Generosity was an attribute by which he measured people. He worked tirelessly and gave endlessly, and put Children's on the map.

I will remember Marshall as a true believer in God... He practiced in private and without much pomp and funfair... He has invited me to say a Muslim prayer before meals we had with family and friends, and before he says Grace himself... One early afternoon, he was being wheeled-in for surgery, under a long general anesthesia, he held my hand and said: "Mohamad, would you pray for me?" and I did... He prayed for me in Rome and I prayed for him in Mecca. It sounds as if we needed a lot of prayers! I know I do! And, I know, he would want me to pray, today... Monsignor, Martha... allow me to a say a short prayer:

- Prayer in Arabic

(O' God, Almighty, have mercy on Marshall, bless his soul and make him reside in your Heavens, O' God, O' Merciful, O' Generous. Amen!)

On behalf of my family, your former patients, residents and fellows, your colleagues and all of us at Children's, "Ma'a As-Salamah Ya Marshall", Farewell, Adieu.

Comments By: Mohamad Jaafar, M.D.