

INTERVIEW WITH PASTOR FORT

WELL GOOD MORNING PASTOR, IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE TALKED HOW ARE YOU DOING THIS MORNING?

Well, good morning to you. I am indeed blessed and happy to be alive.

MUCH HAS HAPPENED IN YOUR LIFE SINCE YOUR LAST ON-LINE INTERVIEW. YOUR MOM PASSED AWAY AMONG OTHER THINGS. HOW ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT?

Much has happened since we last spoke. And yes, my Mother, Sis. Juanita Fort did go home to be with The LORD. She transitioned from this life into eternal peace on June 7th. I can tell you that it's August now and I'm still trippin' with it. You know like everyone who experiences the death of a dear, dear loved one. I still find myself picking up the phone from time to time to call her. I find myself thinking of calling and talking to her, to tell her about a certain think in my life or ministry and then I remember... she's not here anymore!

She was not "sick unto death". She'd been hospitalized with some pain in her leg. And to make a long story short, she never really recovered. Initially they said everything could be handled with medication. In fact, she entered therapy after some days in the hospital and I fully expected her to go home. In fact, my Sister Candice was preparing to take an extended leave from work and move back to San Jose to care for our Mother for as long as necessary.

I went home on a Sunday morning to see her after she'd been taken to the hospital and all seemed relatively well. I received another call on a Thursday that I should get to San Jose as soon as possible. I caught the earliest flight out and my Mom died shortly after virtually all of us arrived. They said she died from complications related to blood clots.

YOU KNOW THE CHURCH WAS PRAYING WITH AND FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY! HOW WAS THE FUNERAL SERVICE?

Well the Home Going Celebration was the single most difficult thing I've ever had to go through thus far. It even exceeds a health scare I had personally some years ago. After leaving San Jose that Friday, I returned to Arizona where Sis. Fort and I participated in the Home Going Celebration of her Aunt (a woman who was really like a type of 2nd Mother to her). Then on Sunday afternoon, after preaching, I led the Home Going Celebration for a dearly departed Brother from our Church, Bro. Robinson. He died very unexpectedly as well.

So with these events in my immediate rear-view mirror, I went back to San Jose for my Mother's Home Going Celebration. And I mention those other events to say that in hindsight- I really think I looked forward to keeping myself busy with "the work of the Church" in order to avoid confronting my real and very raw feelings about my Mother's physical death. Consequently, when I got to the Church for the service; saw my siblings, cousins, Uncles, Aunts, old Church saints from my home Church, my Mother's Pastor, etc., I really was not prepared to handle it emotionally.

The reality of the situation really hit me when my family and I stood at the entrance doors to the Sanctuary at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church (the family procession was led by my brother Pastor Harry Fort and I... standing shoulder to shoulder); and I looked down at a program someone had handed me with my Mother's picture on the front, and I saw that white casket at the top of the aisle and the foot of the pulpit! That's when it really hit me. It was hard. But GOD's grace is indeed sufficient!

WOW! THANKS FOR SHARING THAT WITH US. LET'S MOVE ON TO SOME OTHER THINGS. YOU KNOW WE'RE USED TO LEARNING A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOU WITH EACH INTERVIEW. WE AT CANAAN KNOW HOW YOU LOVE MUSIC... "SWEET, SWEET MUSIC". I'M THINKING ABOUT OUR 1ST EVER "SENIOR SAINTS SUNDAY" HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THAT AWESOME MUSICAL CELEBRATION IDEA?

Well you're right. You know I do enjoy good music. This is actually connected to my Mother's Home Going. Sis. Fort, Kiara, Kennedi and I were driving to San Jose for my Mom's funeral. And as usual I brought along some CD's to listen to. While listening to Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Diana Krall and Louis Armstrong I got the idea to do a kind of musical segment in our program that would honor our Senior's from a "generational perspective".

In short, we had some great members of CMBC catch the vision. Two different sisters portrayed Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday respectively. Some brothers portrayed the band playing behind them, and they lip-synched the songs: "A Tisket A Tasket" and "God bless the Child". It was wonderful. We topped it off with classic, traditional Gospel of course! And our Senior Ensemble blessed us one and all.

WELL PASTOR I KNOW YOU'VE TO RUN. PERHAPS WE CAN TALK MORE NEXT TIME?

Yes, I'd like that.