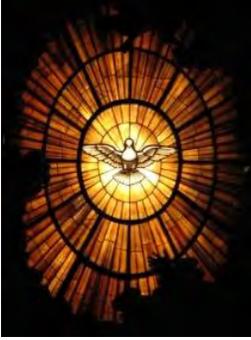


DEATH, THEN LIFE



Father George Wolf died February 6. I first met Father George four years ago on Friday July 23. As pastor of the Cathedral, he married my daughter and Friday evening was the rehearsal. My daughter and son-in-law liked Father George and they met with him many times in preparation for their marriage.

I have enjoyed my brief conversations with Father George at the wedding reception and the few, cherished opportunities since.

My daughter gave birth to a son three weeks after Father George's passing. This child is a fruit of a marriage that began with a blessing and was guided by his pastoral care.

We live lives that are connected through a web of relationships, even relationships where death precedes life.

My mother died young in Cleveland, June of 1999. Her death was expected but I was still saddened to finally say good-bye at her funeral. I spent the remainder of the week dividing up her belongings with my sister, each item bringing another memory of mom.

My wife picked me up at the Portland airport a week later and we drove to American Dream Pizza, across the street from Providence Hospital. Pizza is my comfort food. Whenever I returned from a business trip to Asia, my wife and I would stop at American Dream Pizza for my comforting reentry into Portland. Returning from my mother's funeral also required a bit of decompression made smooth by a slice of pizza.

While we ate our pizza a friend walked in from across the street, from the hospital. His wife had just given birth to a son and he was taking a moment to eat. His joy of being a father, even for a third time, provided him with the adrenaline to overcome any weariness.

As we talked over pizza, he also shared that earlier that day friends of ours had given birth to twins, stillborn. They knew near the end of her pregnancy that the twins would die and they had arranged for their pastor to baptize the twins in the delivery room.

I was immediately struck by the web of relationships that started with death, continued with death, and ended with life, this time immediately juxtaposed over pizza and beer.

In the Eucharistic Liturgy we celebrate the memorial of Jesus' Death and Resurrection. We are reminded that "He gave himself up to death, and, rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life." We begin with death and end with life.

Sin happens. We are human, so sin happens. Sin is embarrassing and we humans tend to deal with embarrassment by inuring ourselves until we become blind to the barriers we have built between us and God. These barriers prevent us from being in relationship with God, a relationship that God desires. We become dead to sin and dead from sin. But we can be reconciled to life. We can choose Christ. We can be in relationship with him.

This Easter Sunday, we celebrate that Christ died for our sins and rose from death to new life, for us, so that we can be reconciled with Christ and choose Christ. So that we can be in relationship with him.

We celebrate a relationship that began with death and ends with life, eternal life.

(Readings for Easter Sunday)



Office of Life, Justice, and Peace