

**August 20, 2020 Funeral Homily:** It is likely that few of you are familiar with the name Anne Morrow Lindbergh. She was married to one of America's legendary and celebrated aviators, Charles Lindbergh. In 1927 the then obscure mail pilot zoomed to fame by crossing the Atlantic Ocean in his plane, the "Spirit of St. Louis", and landing on an airfield in Paris, France. He received a hero's welcome. Upon returning to the United States, he was feted by the government and the media. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Presidential Medal of Honor and later participated as the guest of honor in a ticker tape parade in New York City's famous Canyon of Heroes. He was Time Magazine's first Man of the Year.

But the life of Anne and her husband took an unexpected turn for the worse in 1932. Their infant son, Charles, Jr. was kidnapped, taken into captivity and later murdered. The kidnapping was sudden, unexpected, horrifying and unnerving. Their life was shattered. America's media called it the "crime of the century".

In her best-selling book, "Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead", Anne M. Lindbergh bared her soul. In her days of grief and sorrow, she found comfort in the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. At a time when her spirits were low, she leaned on the one who said, "Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will give you rest".

Death is a profound mystery. Few of us fail to experience death as an unexpected and unwelcome visitor, a thief in the night. Our loved one has been taken away. Our greatest challenge as Christians is to arise from the darkness of grief and despair by trusting in the one who conquered death by His resurrection.

Our human life is not defined by death. Christ said, "I have come to bring you life, life in all its fullness". Death does not have the final word. Our life has a destination. It is the gateway into a new, richer life, the end of a journey and the arrival home. God calls us to Himself. Death cannot rob us forever. Only death enables us the possibility of going home to the Father's House. In today's gospel Jesus reassures his anxious disciples that he "goes to prepare a palace for them, so that where he is they will be also."

Death reminds us that nothing in this life lasts forever... all things are passing. Being conscious of our own mortality helps to put life in its proper perspective. Recall the words intoned by the priest on Ash Wednesday, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return". The loss of a loved one can bring us to our knees.

Today, we mourn the loss of a young man. Not even death can rob us of the memories we all have of the departed. Indeed, death can sometimes be a blessing. Recall Saint Paul's words addressed to the Christians at Phillipi: "For to me, life is Christ, and death is gain". (Phil. 1:21)

We live on the threshold of eternity. Each day brings us closer to our destination. We are moving toward the embrace of God. The prophet Isaiah promises that our tears will be wiped away. The brightness of Eternal Life shines before the darkness of death.

In 1945, a thirty-nine year old Lutheran pastor was arrested by the German Gestapo and eventually condemned to death by hanging. According to a reliable source, his final words were: "This is the end, for me the beginning".

For the Christian the end, death, marks the beginning of everlasting life!

May God grant T. a merciful judgment and at the end of our days on earth, may we be reunited with him in heaven.

Amen!