

Until recently, one of the most popular Lenten devotions was the Stations of the Cross. A tradition of longstanding, the stations are fourteen images of Christ in the last hours of his death and, following the crucifixion, his burial. The tenth station is "Jesus is stripped of his garments". The image is disturbing. Everything has been taken away from Jesus, including his freedom, his friends and his work. Now they take away from him his honor and dignity. Jesus is exposed to shame. His public stripping means that he is no longer anything at all; he is simply an outcast, despised by everyone.

Let it be noted that Jesus died praying the Psalms. Though humiliated and in pain, he placed his trust in his Heavenly Father. In Luke's gospel, his last words are "Into your hands, Father I commend my Spirit"

Our life as Christians is patterned on Jesus.

As the years pass and we enter into old age, we are likely to suffer a series of painful losses, such as our health, our livelihood, and the death of loved ones. Lastly, there is the ultimate loss of one's life, the most devastating blow of all.

My dear father turns ninety-two in July of this year. In recent years my father has suffered the loss of his memory, the death of my mother and many of his closest friends, the sale of his home, retirement, the loss of his hearing and bladder problems which has resulted in rather embarrassing moments His once virile body shows all the signs of old age. But through all the changes, his immortal soul remained untouched. His faith in Christ remains undiminished. One is reminded of the words from the Book of Wisdom: "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, AND NO TORMENT SHALL TOUCH THEM" (I Cor. 15:54).

In Sacred Scripture, the everlasting joy of heaven is presented with a description of luminous garments. The elect are clothed in glory In the Book of Revelation, the elect stand before the Lord's presence clothed in white robes, a reminder of a Christian's baptismal attire, with palm branches in their hand. (Rev. 7:9).

The Apostle Saint Paul assures us that we "will rise again", free from corruption, and we shall find ourselves changed, this corruptible nature of ours WILL BE CLOTHED IN IMMORTALITY (I Cor. 15).

The one we honor today with Christian burial belonged to Christ.

In today's second reading Saint Paul is emphatic on that very point. He writes, "For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:9).

Let us pray that the Lord grant our deceased loved one and that he be re-clothed in the bright garments of immortality