

## Funeral homily for James Carey

In 1997, the highly regarded Gallup polling organization conducted a survey of a select group of adults and asked them what sort of support they desired in the final moments of their mortal life. Their responses to a sensitive question are worth noting. First, they recognized the need to have someone with them who could share their fears and concerns, and second, it seemed important to have someone pray with them in the waning moments of life. Implicit in their responses is the dread of dying alone, with no one near to bring the person exiting this vale of tears, words of comfort, peace and love..

In her book, "The War is the Passion", the English mystic Carryl Houselander, writes of the comforting of Christ in the final hours of his life. She trots out all the familiar names: Veronica, Simon of Cyrene, the so-called "Good thief", John the beloved disciple, Mary of Magdala, Mary the wife of Clopas and Christ's own mother, Mary. They all comforted Christ in his passion and consoled him with their love. They were not passive, disinterested spectators. On the contrary, they had an active role to play in the historical Passion of our Savior. All four gospel writers justifiably singled them out for praise. Steadfast, they did not desert Him to die alone without the consolation of friends and family members who truly cared. In answer to the question found in a African American hymn, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" the answer given by those who turned up on the road to Calvary is a resounding "yes".

Comforting the afflicted is one of the Spiritual works of Mercy. Christians recognize in the afflicted the face of Christ. They, too, take part in the mystery of the Passion. They wipe away the tears and sweat of the sick and dying. The words of Saint Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians come to mind: "God comforts us in our afflictions so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any way afflicted".

In the final months of his long life, Jim Carey, a long-time parishioner of Sacred Heart Church, was comforted by family and friends alike, particularly by his loving daughter Alicia. Only hours before His death, I found Alicia at his bedside in the nursing home holding his hand. I have no doubt she was praying with great intensity. It was a poignant moment and one which I will not soon forget.

As Christians, we play an important role in preparing the terminally ill person for death and for that last and final journey to the other side of earthly life, which we call eternity.

For us Christians, Life is changed, not ended.

Jim Carey was a man of uncommon virtue. He was a loving father and husband, a faithful parishioner, a friend to many in our local community and a man of robust faith.

He will be missed.

It is my hope that once our earthly life is ended, we are reunited with our dear Jim, who now we believe, is in the company of his wife, Ruth whose funeral mass I celebrated only a few years ago.

Till we meet again, Amen.