

Homily for Alyce Knabe Memorial Mass

In his fine book, "Lincoln's Battle with God", author Stephen Mansfield gives a gripping account of the last hours of our nation's sixteenth president's life. Only moments before his life ended abruptly by an assassin's bullet, Lincoln said to his wife, "We will visit the Holy Land" and "there is no place I desire to see than Jerusalem".

Please note that one of the many images of the life hereafter in Sacred Scripture is "the New Jerusalem". It appears twice in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. It serves as a reminder that the Christian is a wayfarer, a pilgrim, and his final destination is in heaven, his final resting place. We read in the Letter to the Hebrews "Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come".

Saint Paul writes that our citizenship is in heaven.

In the antiphon that is sung or recited at the end of a funeral mass, the priest celebrant says, "May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs come to welcome you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem".

In the Gospel of Matthew (7:13) Jesus speaks of choosing the narrow path in life rather than a broad highway. It is the path that leads to green pastures (Ps. 23). Early Christians called themselves followers of the Way. Jesus is the "Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn. 14:6).

Two of the early disciples of Jesus encountered him after his Resurrection on the road to Emmaus. In two of the most popular songs of the last century there is a reference to a road, the road to Mandalay and the Road to Morocco.

A long running dramatic series on television was named, "Highway to Heaven". In our contemporary culture, one seldom hears of life after death. Indeed, too many of our influential university professors either ignore or ridicule the Church's teaching on the Resurrection. Recently, a survey conducted by a reputable polling organization in Italy found that no fewer than twenty percent of Italian citizens no longer believe in eternal life, for them, death means the end and not a new beginning a door closed forever.

For Alice, her earthy pilgrimage has come to an end. And now the hope of eternal life dawns for one who was a disciple of Jesus.

As our life draws to its conclusion, we find ourselves in the situation of the two thieves, hanging near the cross of Christ.

We can either hand himself over to Christ or we can turn our head from Christ and die alone and let our soul fall into a deep, dark abyss, a black hole.

A life lived in dependence on God is completed by a holy death in which one's life is summed up in the confident and trustful words of Jesus, "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit."

These words sum up the life of Christ.

I am certain they sum up the life of Alice.

Amen.