

John's Gospel contains a long Farewell Discourse that spans more than 3 chapters. Jesus is instructing his disciples before he leaves them and goes to the Father. We read these chapters during the Easter season as they deal with life after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. In chapter 14, Jesus offers words of consolation for his disciples<sup>i</sup>. "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?" (Jn 14:2). We often hear this reading at funerals as it offers words of consolation for those grieving the loss of a loved one.

Death troubles us especially when a loved one is in the end stages of life. In addition to grief, we may have to confront our own fears of mortality and loss. If we believe in Jesus and in the resurrection, we need not fear. Death is a necessary stage on a journey to eternal life where there is no more pain or suffering.

Jesus tells us, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places" (Jn 14:2a) Heaven, "the Father's house," is not so much a place as the divine communion of life and love in which we share eternity with the Trinity. God offers us a share of his divinity that we might live with him and in him forever an ever.

I recall visiting a woman of great faith at the end of her life. She knew she was going to die, but she also knew that eternal life awaited her. She would soon be reunited with her loved ones. Despite the pain and suffering, she bore a beautiful smile. Her face radiated the joy and peace of Christ. Her mature understanding of eternal life brought great comfort to her loved ones.

In my father's house in Maryland, Dad always had a pen and paper handy to write down thoughts inspired by God. Then like priming a pump, my father would let the words flow off of the pen and onto the paper in the form of a poem. A simple phrase like, "The Lord will guide you always" brought forth thoughts of eternity and God's power to heal all wounds.<sup>ii</sup>

We are told that after the downpour of rain,  
The sun will come out and shine once again;  
And, yes, the rainbows will bring added cheer –  
A reminder that Heaven is ever so near.

We might compare the raindrops to tears,  
That now fill our days with sorrowful fears;  
But soon these teardrops will vividly impart,  
That rainbows, too, will come to your heart.

So there is no need, your grief to conceal,  
For life holds no sorrow that Heaven can't heal.  
Though our Lord has claimed a favorite son –  
The will of our Heavenly Father was done.

You walk now in faith, when a loved one is gone,  
To enter God's Kingdom of sunshine each dawn;  
And though you now grieve, as daily you roam....  
Yet, rejoicing that a loved one is now "safely home!"

Gone from your vision – beyond Heaven's gate –  
Your loved one in patience, now humbly will wait;  
He asks for your prayers – do not think the worst –  
For he only passed through Heaven's gate first.

Memories so blessed, will make you aware,  
How near is your loved one with each heartfelt prayer.  
Yes, God's message is clear, to so tenderly reveal:  
Life holds no sorrow that Heaven can't heal!

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, Francis; Wright, William M. IV. The Gospel of John. Pages 240-243.

<sup>ii</sup> Heaven's Healing Power by Ezio M Tozzi