

*Ordinary Time 13B 2015*

*Do not be afraid!*

During this past week, we celebrated the funeral of our beloved Deacon, Joseph Gabriel. It was an extraordinary moment in the life of our parish, one of those times when our singing filled this entire church, one of those moments we powerfully proclaimed what is most central to what we believe: our hope for resurrection life.

To be sure the death of Deacon Gabriel was a moment of sadness and grief, but it was not a time of confusion or despair. It was a moment when, in the face of death, we affirmed our faith in the power of the Lord's resurrection. It was a moment we could say with full faith and conviction, "Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life, and because he is, we shall live even if we die."

I mention the events of this past week because today's readings show why the power of God is stronger than the power of death. They assure us that if we live in God's love nothing, not even death, can separate us from God's love. The Book of Wisdom, for example, teaches us that God did not create death. Rather, it was the wicked who invited death into the world by their sins. It was because of the devil's envy for our life that death made its appearance world. What God wills is life. What God wills is that we share in his own divine life.

Jesus was deeply aware of the power death holds over us, and so when Jairus came to him, pleading as only a father can plead that he save his daughter, Jesus immediately agreed to go to his home. But there were others who needed his attention as well, and so while he heals a woman who has suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years, the young girl of twelve years dies. It's too late; there is no need for Jesus now. Death has been victorious yet again; and there is nothing Jesus can do.

But Jesus understands the power of God. He knows the power of God is stronger than the power of death, and he tells Jairus and he tells us, "do not be afraid, just have faith." Do not be afraid of the power of death, because God's love is stronger than death. Do not be afraid of the power of death, because God did not create death. Do not be afraid, but believe in the power of God, because all things are possible with God. Believe in the power of God, because fear paralyzes; but faith frees us. Fear makes us slaves of sin; but faith makes us children of God.

I've celebrated many funerals, and every time I do, I am reminded of the power of faith. I am reminded there is nothing to fear if we live in and with Christ. I am reminded that faith overcomes fear. I am reminded that the love of God is more powerful than death. So do not be afraid, do not fear, but believe and trust in the One who loves you.