

Richard Sands Funeral

Friday February 3, 2017

First Reading Wisdom 3:1-9

The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. For if in the eyes of men, indeed, they seem punished, yet is their hope full of immortality; Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself. Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love: Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with the elect.

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep. Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words.

Gospel John 14:1-6

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. 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? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where [I] am going you know the way. Thomas said to him, Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

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There are few things in our lives that will challenge and overwhelm our faith like death does. We are all in shock with Dick's passing. And yet we all know that none are as devastated as much as you Ann with what Dick and you have been through the last several months. It seems so real one minute and so unreal the next.

The Scriptures today are about death and yet we are not touched by a morbid theme with no hope. Intellectually we know death is the fate of all of us. Yet when it strikes, it can crush us with sadness. Even Jesus wept. We are helpless to rise up by ourselves out of the death that afflicts us. It appears to us that death won. For this very reason, we need to reflect on God loving us so much that He alone transforms death into life.

In the 2nd reading we have been called to console each other ...to remind each other that we are not here grieving without hope. God loves us so much that *"through Jesus, He will bring with him those who have fallen asleep."* But how do we know that this is true and not just some words to make us feel better? How can we be truly consoled and confident that that Dick is with Jesus?

I think the answer and evidence is in what has been going on the last several months. Your family and friends have gathered from far and wide...Dick touched a lot of people in his lifetime. We hug and cry together, yes, but more importantly we come to share our love for Dick...and for Ann. Today we have come to celebrate life ...eternal life...not eternal death. Imagine if you will that this sanctuary is filled with hundreds and hundreds of angels and saints surrounding Dick, welcoming him to be with Jesus and to glorify God with Him. So we can believe...in all these things we conquer death overwhelmingly through God who loves us. For I am convinced that nothing, especially death, will separate us from the love of God. We are all blessed with the love of God and we must do everything possible to share it. And so just like Dick did his whole life, we aren't

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just talking, we are doing it. Dick's legacy of love and life is not over...it lives on in you and in everyone who knew him.

Our faith does not rest on proof of what we see...it rests in our hearts with what we know is true. Death did not win. Dick is waiting in Heaven and we will be reunited with him one day.

Today we are asked to not let our hearts be troubled. To have faith in God; to have faith also in Jesus. If we live and die in that belief, then it is with the Apostles; with the ancient saints; with our loved ones...they are gone, but they are not forgotten.... These are all the people we pray for daily...if we live and die in the faith that we come to life in the love of Jesus, nothing of their goodness and grace will be lost and forgotten in a grave somewhere. God loves us so much that He alone transforms death into life.

We love you Dick, rest in peace....live in peace.