

## From The Pastor

Life and death, death and new life are constant cycles. Both are intimately united to the other. For new life to spring forth some kind of death has to take place. ‘Unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies it produces much fruit’.

Late on Easter Sunday evening, my father died a peaceful death. Many of us had gathered earlier in the afternoon and prayed his final anointing and commendation prayers. It was a blessing for all as it was evident the end was increasingly near. Yet, as had been his pattern, dad clung to life to the very end. Finally, at 11:35pm with my niece and brother and sister in law present, he passed.

Thank you for your kind prayers during my Dad’s final illness. It was a comfort to me, and to all of us. I had earlier given my Dad one of our prayer blankets that he valued and used often. These simple things become a meaningful comfort. After a reasonably short diminishment, and then significant decline in health, we are all grateful that Dad had a quiet and peaceful death.

The letting go is not easy, and I suspect will become more poignant as the days and weeks go by. I am consoled now by the faith he held and practiced all his life. Now I am able to practice the words I preach to you; I believe what I profess about the death and Resurrection of Jesus, and his death is the path we follow to the Father. The emotional loss and sadness remain, yet the power of our faith has been an essential stabilizing factor at the root of our lives.

We will all leave a legacy. We will all be a grain of wheat that will fall to the earth and die. The fruit that is borne will be the legacy of how we have lived our lives in love and self-giving. For my father, that is easy to see. He was a quiet man emotionally, not very expressive with words, yet he could not have been more clear about his integrity, faithful generosity, and inner compass for justice. These gifts are evident in the numerous children, grandchildren, and great grand children who seemed to find their way to Dad’s house many Sundays’ a month.

Passing through death to new life is never easy. It is the process that makes us more and more fully human. Pain and suffering are somehow an inescapable part of the human condition. When we die the little deaths of life or the final passing, things can get a little messy. Realities have to be faced for what they are. Inner things that had been hidden come to light, fears will be exposed, and for a time uncertainty will reign. Change is hard, and letting go is an essential part of change.

What does this look like? It looks like what happened in the upper room. Prior to the Spirit being given to those gathered they are huddled in fear and sadness. Clearly, some kind of transformation must take place if the world is to know and accept the work and promise of God through Jesus; *fear and sadness, nor hiding behind locked doors are works of God.*

Perhaps more tightly locked than the front door was the minds and the hearts of those in the room. Fear and doubt has a way of binding the mind and heart from seeing things fully. Shock and fright follow with the appearance of Jesus. Still no freedom of the Spirit, but the scene is set for new life to begin.

‘Peace be with you’, Jesus says. The disciples are stunned into joy. Seeing it was really Jesus, they examine his hands and side. ‘Peace be with you’ he says again. Then he *breathes* on them, and says, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’. Jesus has recovered his life breath. He is alive and well. His death has become new life for all. The breath of Jesus is the breath and life of the Spirit: new life in God! No longer dead in sin, we are to be free from fear and hiding, sadness and doubt. This is new life, and a new beginning without end. The disciples revived and were transformed in the Spirit of the One who calls us to a new way of being. A death that had to be faced has borne great fruit for all.

How is this life and breath of Jesus present and active in you? Is your life, in some manner of speaking still behind locked doors, in fear and unknowing? A new beginning is upon us. Open all the doors of your life to the Spirit of Jesus. He is standing at your door with a word of peace and acceptance. He may just come right through those locked doors on his own, or you may more warmly welcome and invite him to come right in. Once inside, ask Jesus for his Holy Spirit. Be willing to accept the new life the Spirit offers.

You may have noticed the new communion cups we started using on Holy Thursday. Many of the glass goblets have been chipped or broken. These new cups are more appropriate and hopefully more long lasting. Thank you to the generous donor who helped make this possible. I hope you like them.

Father John Esper