

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH

My dear friends in Christ, May I extend to you the Church's blessings and message of hope and assurances of God's love on this topic of life after death. Turning to today's Gospel, Jesus re-assures us about the issue of death and our fears surrounding it. He tells us in no uncertain terms that death is certainly not its end to life, but in fact a whole new beginning. Physical death is not end to life, but merely a doorway, a doorway through which we all must pass, a doorway leading us to a whole new world, a whole new dimension to a new and more perfect form of life in heaven because Almighty God lives there.

But how do we know this, how can we be sure of the reality that death is not an end to life, but merely a transformation from this form of life, to a more perfect existence. The following represents three examples of this fact that may help to convince us:

First, divine revelation in the Bible tell us that the Father sent his only Son to announce the "good news," and promise that death is certainly not an end to life, and that He alone is the resurrection and the source of all life. The raising of his friend Lazarus from the dead proves this.

Secondly, Jesus himself announces that He, and He alone is the resurrection, and His own resurrection from death to new life also provides this. You see, Jesus had to first die to this life on earth in order to experience his resurrection fulfills his promise to all humanity, when He said "whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Do you, my brothers and sisters, who are here today, believe this? You see, Jesus' resurrection was meant to pave the way for all of us.

Thirdly, Lets apply good, old fashion common sense to this question, "Is there life after death?" Does it make any sense for God the Father, who created each one of us in His own image and likeness, out of His intense love for us, would He after our birth then forget us? Next, He sent His only begotten Son, to suffer and endure the horrible agony of crucifixion, in order to restore us to Himself. To restore that which He was created? To bring eternal forgiveness to all humanity. Would He, after doing all of this, then forget us? Absolutely not: Does it make any sense to you that Jesus, who freely assumed the death penalty that we deserved resulting from our own sinfulness, then forget us? Would Jesus, by His own agonizing death on the cross, enabling us to be reunited with the Father, then simply abandon us at the hour of our death? Isn't

his resurrection our inheritance as God's children? Would our living God forsake his own children at the time of their greatest need? Of course not! Would any one of you abandon your own children, at a time when they need you most? Certainly not! Consider now, how much greater is God's love for his children, than you have for yours! My point is we must always trust in God's love for us, especially during the severe moments in our lives. So, if God loves each one of us this intensely, can't we reasonably assume, that He wants his children to be reunited with Him in heaven for all eternity?

You see, our loving Father sent his only Son to assume our humanity. Why? To be one with us, to experience all of our joys and all of our sorrows, and most importantly to alleviate our greatest fear, the prospect of our own death. My point is that the assurances of our own after-life, rests squarely on the fact that Jesus, rose from the dead into a totally new and glorious form of life and He now lives eternally with the Father in heaven. It is for this reason that Jesus is called the first-born of the dead. And He did all this, for our hope and expectation, to be a model and an example for all of us. He was simply paving the way for us, to follow Him!

Therefore, physical death is certainly not an end to life. On the contrary, it is a whole new beginning. It is our rebirth to new life with God in heaven. Death is certainly not a sign of defeat, but a sign of victory; it is not a sign of destruction to be avoided, but a sign of goodness to be welcomed, it is not a sign of death, but a sign of life!

Now, the departed has been set free, free from all her earthly burdens, and afflictions, set free from all her earthly pains and sorrows which, in this present moment, plague us all. She has been set free. Set free from this forbidding, foreign land and has gone home! the departed was born free at her natural birth, and lived free during her lifetime. And now she is born free into eternity, born free to follow her heart

BORN FREE TO FOLLOW YOUR HEART

I adapted the lyrics of the following Oscar winning title song from the 1966 movie "Born Free" and would like to recite it now because it gives this moment of celebration of the departed's life greater meaning and expression.

BORN FREE, AS FREE AS THE WIND BLOWS,
AS FREE AS THE GRASS GROWS,
BORN FREE, TO FOLLOW YOUR HEART.

LIVE FREE, AND BEAUTY SURROUNDS YOU.
THE HEAVENS ASTOUND YOU
EACH TIME, YOU LOOKED AT A STAR.

STAY FREE, WHERE NO WALLS DIVIDE YOU,
YOU'RE FREE, WITH THE LORD AS GUIDE,
SO THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE.

BORN FREE, YOUR LIFE WAS WORTH LIVING
BUT ONLY WORTH LIVING
'CAUSE NOW, YOU'RE BORN FREE.

God bless you all
Deacon

Jack