

Many places to be

O God of grace and glory, we remember before you this day our brother Peter. We thank you for giving him to us, his family and friends, to know and to love as a companion on our earthly pilgrimage. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quiet confidence we may continue our course on earth, until, by your call, we are reunited with those who have gone before; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer

AT A CELEBRATION OF PETER WALLINE KNOLES
April 5, 2017

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

THE REV. RANDALL C.K. DAY, D.MIN., PRIEST AND RECTOR

In this gospel reading, Jesus is saying there are many places to be – and I think of Pete and Rose and their travels around and through the world. I think of how they would find the places that were the best places, the out-of-the-way places, the places that local people might know but that tourists didn't frequent. I think of Pete's facility with languages, his ability to communicate in the places he and Rose went – and how language is so much about listening to what another – the other – is saying.

Of course, Jesus is using word pictures for what he wants to say: here translated “dwelling places.” In the King James the word was “mansions” (many mansions) probably reflecting the

way in which we, the translators, imagine things very concretely and in terms we want – but in that old form expressing the richness of the sacred, the abundance of the divine that is surely true.

And the word pictures both fall short and spur us forward. To go to what we hear in this reading from Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: houses not made from hands. What's wonderful about that is we can hear it and move on but, *what?* What is a house not made with hands – it's something that none of us have seen.

And we get used to hearing words in religious contexts like “in the heavens” when what we're being told is these houses that we can't imagine are in eternal places

beyond our experience, beyond our ability to understand, invisible.

We can both receive this kind of expression and really wonder what it could possibly mean.

Back to Pete – and really Pete and Rose (because after all their years together that’s the way it is) – and I think of all their movement that had a stability, yes, here in Los Olivos for so many years, but also living out their wanderlust – rooted but branching out. Is that staying in one place or moving? Did the movement make the stability possible or the other way around?

Again, we can wonder....

So Pete is off to a new place – or new places, new ways of being.

And we can’t really know where – though we can be confident at the same time.

And as Jesus was trying to uncover for us and for all and whether here in this visible world or beyond – it isn’t the place, it’s the way, the movement, the action.

We really are so limited in this time of our lives.

We want it to be simple.

We make up our minds about what we see – or what we think we see.

Living then dead. Here then there.

But it’s more than all of that.

Jesus gave us this larger

picture too – someone who was human – exactly as we are – and yet, at the same time, not.

Jesus dead. And alive – the Easter proclamation. Both at once.

Is that possible?

Here we are celebrating Easter in the midst of Lent.

Yes often, perhaps all of the time, more than one thing – and often contradictory things are true at once.

We can look at this picture of Pete his senior year in college and know that this was the same man, years later, so many experiences encountered, ravaged by Parkinsons, who has died. And yet he was never not this handsome young buck. And he lives within Rose’s life, the lives of his children and their children, in the lives of his friends, his students, people we will never know he came across. And he lives beyond our seeing – invisible to us. All at the same time.

Does this wake us up a bit?

Does this make us wonder about the breadth, the depth, the full extent of what life in God is all the time?

There is great opportunity for us in imagining Pete’s whole life, the abundance, the richness, the fullness of it then and as it continues now – the many mansions, the many “places” and seasons of his life... and to reflect

on the lives we are living – that we will continue to live – today and in the future – in houses not made by hands in the eternal realms...

We may have to let some of our certainty, some of our need for control and structure and understanding go to fully embrace all that is Pete's now, that is ours now, that we will continue to share in life.

John O'Donohue, the Irish Catholic poet, philosopher and teacher wrote extensively about death before his own untimely death in 2008. In his book *Anam Cara* on the topic: *Are Space and Time Different in the Eternal World?*

He writes: "When the soul leaves the body, it is no longer under the burden and control of space and time. The soul is free; distance and separation hinder it no more."

In his book *Benedictus* which is also published as *To Bless the Space Between Us* O'Donohue writes:

"If you really live your life to the full, death will never have power over you. It will never seem like a destructive, negative event. It can become, for you, the moment of release into the deepest treasures of your own nature; it can be your full entry into the temple of your soul. If you are able to let go of things, you learn to die spiritually

in little ways during your life. When you learn to let go of things, a greater generosity, openness, and breath comes into your life. Imagine this letting go multiplied a thousand times at the moment of your death. That release can bring you a completely new divine belonging."

Thanks be to God for Pete's completely new divine belonging – and the divine belonging that is being offered to each of – to all of humanity all the time.



ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY
EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL
Los Olivos, California

www.smitv.org