

24 Sunday A

September 13, 2020

St. Patrick

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We hear Saint Paul encourage us in today's Scripture: **“None of us lives as his own master, and none of us dies as his own master. Whether we live, or die, we belong to the Lord.”**

This past Tuesday evening I was at the bedside of a parishioner, Laney Merrill. He is dying, and I was joined in prayer by his son David and by parishioner Sharon Evans.

In his 20s during the 1970s, Laney put the roofing on the very top of our bell tower here at St. Patrick's. He didn't become a Catholic until six years ago. He lived at the Parkview overlooking Overton Park. Each Sunday, in his wheelchair, Laney would take the bus in order to join us for the 8:30 a.m. Mass. In his wheelchair, he would be in front of the first row.

As I spoke in his ear a number of one-line Scripture passages, I began by saying, “Laney, **‘Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.’**”

The Apostle Paul speaks to us of our hope, and he may have used a baptismal hymn sung in the early church in order to put the focus of our hope on Jesus: **“Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”**

St. Patrick's: Let's face it—2020 has been in many respects a dreadful year for us all. In a poem, the Pulitzer-Prize winner Mary Oliver writes:

“Someone I loved once gave me  
a box full of darkness.

“It took me years to understand  
that this, too, was a gift” (1).

We've come to face that, this year, we've been handed “a box full of darkness.” Oh, in our “box full of darkness,” we've been given the fears of the pandemic and its ability to cast a pall of anxiety over almost every dimension of our lives. Not only that, we've seen the harshness of racial injustice in its suffocating forms. And, finally, we shake our heads in disbelief at the chaos which has overtaken our nation.

The Apostle Paul ends his reading today with the core of our hope: **“That is why Christ died and came to life again, that *he* might be Lord of both the dead and the living.”**

The filmmaker who is acknowledged as the founding father of the American cinema is Cecil B. DeMille. He died in 1959. Of his 70 movies, “The Ten Commandments” stands out. Well, one day he was reading a book while floating in a canoe on a lake in northern Maine. Something nudged him to look away from the book, and he glanced into the water. He saw there a swarm of beetles playing on the surface.

One of the beetles crawled halfway up the side of canoe, stuck the claws of its legs into the wood....and died. DeMille went back to reading his book.

Around three hours later, DeMille glanced down at the dead beetle again. What he saw startled him. The beetle had dried up in the sun, and its back had split open. Slowly, something began to come forth from the split: first, a head; then, wings; finally a tail. It was a beautiful dragonfly, and it flew away enjoying its new life. DeMille took his finger and felt the dried-out shell of the beetle. It was like a tomb (2).

Yes, three days after he died on the cross Jesus likewise underwent a transformation—risen from the dead, his body gloriously alive. And that is the heart of our hope, Friends! Indeed, we’ve been given this year “a box full of darkness.” Years from now, hopefully we’ll see with the eyes of grace that there was a gift in all of this. We might not see it now; later, we may be graced with insight. New hope coming alive in us, and the Risen Jesus is leaning on us with his love. **Indeed, “whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord!”**

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(1) “The Uses of Sorrow,” written in 2007; found in [livesimple.com](http://livesimple.com).

(2) As told by Mark Link, S.J., in Challenge 2000: A Daily Meditation Program based on *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Allen, Texas: Tabor Publishing, 1993) pg. 326.

*General Intercessions*

*September 13, 2020 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**Deepen the gift of hope within us, that we might experience Jesus' victory both in life and in death; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Shape the hearts and minds of those who govern, that they may bring about equity between the poor and the wealthy; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Help us to show our love and appreciation for grandparents, and give them all they need; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Console those who are paralyzed by fear of Covid-19; heal those who are sick; encourage those who offer medical care to those with coronavirus; and give wisdom to those doing research for a vaccine; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Be with those suffering from the wildfires waging on the West Coast; give us a reverential care for the environment; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give eternal peace and joy to those grandparents who have died, and to all who have died through violence; we pray to you, O Lord—**

