

Chaplain's Bulletin August 17, 2025



Dear Folks,

My reflection of late has been on God making order out of chaos so that life may flourish, and we are called to participate in that works. I'm reflecting on the Gospel of Matthew and on my own life through that lens.

The last few months have been draining. I'm surprised how tired I've gotten. There have been challenges navigating the health care system and the different kinds of procedures required. Maybe processing the whole business is part of it. This is before the major surgeries begin and the thyroid issue is still a wild card.

One of my adventures this year has been planning for death. The doctors tell me that the chances of my dying from my current issues are very small (modern medicine does great stuff) and I'm going to try to live another thirty years, but this has occasioned things that I should have done a long time ago. I have gotten my will done, planned and prepaid my funeral, and signed my advanced directive. This, of course makes it easier on my loved ones, whoever is left when I go, and so is an act of love and responsibility. Getting these things in order means less chaos for others. Some try to avoid thinking or talking about their death and the practical planning for it, but it is nothing to be afraid of. As Tony Stark said, "Part of the journey is the end." We all get one death, most of us don't know when or how, but we can be sure it is going to come, and there is nothing to be gained by trying to hide from it. It is liberating to look that basic truth in the face. I want people to throw a party when I die.

St. Paul was quite familiar with death and come close many times before he was finally executed. His take was this: "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I continue living in the body, that will mean fruitful work for me. Hence, I do not know which I should choose. I am pulled in opposite directions. My desire is to depart and to be with Christ, for that is far better, but it is a more urgent need for you that I remain in the body (Philippians 1:21-21)."

It has taken me thirty years to develop a vision of Church that I think is workable, and I would like to have some more time to try to practice it. I like my life, and I like what I've been doing at the parishes, but God will decide when the time is up. We are called to be ready (see Matthew 24:42).

Some in our worship committee have read "Hope to Die: The Christian Meaning of Death and the Resurrection of the Body" by Scott Hahn with Emily Stimpson Chapman. It talks about the Catholic ritual of funerals, and how people trying to minimize or avoid the ritual undermines our faith in the resurrection of the body. The liturgy makes manifest and reinforces within us the mysteries of the faith, and they are most powerful when we are focused, not on what we want or our experiencing the liturgy, but on the mystery to which it points.

My questions for today are: If Jesus came to get us today, what would be our reaction? What will we most wish we had done before? What will we wish we hadn't put so much time into?

The day is coming, of that we can be sure.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim