

Pastor's Monday  
January 14, 2008

Death and Life! WOW!

Eva Lose passed away on Christmas Eve. Because I was away, Gary, her husband chose to have the memorial service after I returned. Saturday we gathered. "Oh, How I Love Jesus" was the title I gave to my message, reflecting the children's song Eva and I sang again and again, even in her darkest days.

Oh, How I love Jesus Oh, How I love Jesus  
Oh, How I love Jesus – Because He first loved me.

To me he is so Wonderful and I love him,  
To me he is so Wonderful and I love him,  
To me he is so Wonderful and I love him,  
Because he First loved me.

And this is what the Christian faith is all about – to say that God is wonderful and that we love him, even in the midst of life's most bitter disappointments. The service was a celebration of God's love and the special way that Eva shared that love with her family, friends and the Open Arms Community.

For me, the memorial service was almost a rehearsal for the memorial service that my brother-in-law, Dr Marv Ziprick, and I will be conducting in New Orleans on January 28 for our mother-in-law, Nancy Wedig, who passed away in Annandale, VA (D.C. area) on Friday, January 11. While I was not able to minister to my mother in law in her last week, I was able to do that for Eva. Although their life span (Eva 49 years, Mom 83 years), family situation (Eva one son, Mom five daughters) and living situation (Eva with husband and son in her own home, Mom widowed since 1997 and without home since Hurricane Katrina) their hope (spell that HOPE!) was the same, their Jesus was the same, their faith was the same, and their appreciation of the Lord's Supper was the same. ...and their final destination, the same!

Then this weekend at the 8:30 service we celebrated the death and rebirth of Anthony Alexander Barton in the waters of Baptism! This morning I was privileged to teach about Baptism to Ms. Heather's Kindergarten class. This past Wednesday and this coming Wednesday our confirmation lessons focus on Baptism. A unique part of our Lutheran faith is that we believe that life eternal from Jesus is ours from the time of our Baptism on – a fragile gift to be sure until we die in the faith – but that understanding gives us not only a fresh look at life on this earth, but certainly a fresh look at our future in heaven.

I am very grateful for the wonderful way that my mother-in-law accepted me and became a cheerleader for me. Even as a vicar (intern) dating her oldest daughter – and then marrying her, she was the perfect mirror of appreciation for even the most modest of accomplishments. If she had a critical bone in her body, soul, or spirit, it was never expressed. Her faithful witness and perpetual good cheer are qualities that I will appreciate until I join her in heaven.

Many questions have been asked.... Let me summarize. Mom suffered with congestive heart failure the past couple of years with several hospitalizations. In fact, she and my brother Richard, who passed away in May, were patients at the same time at Oschner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans. Both of her homes were destroyed in Katrina, and while the one in MS was rebuilt, because of her health limitations, she was not able to live there. For most of the time since Katrina (September 2005), she lived with her sister-in-law, Aunt Ruth, in Poplarville, MS. At the time of her fall, a week ago this past Thursday, she was staying with her daughter Bonnie in Annandale, VA. When we were transferring airlines and going through customs in Wash, DC, on our trip back from South Africa, we got the word that Mom was in the ICU. Judy did not continue on to Texas with me, but stayed. The other two sisters, Becky from Edmonton and Nancy from Indiana, joined Judy and Bonnie on Saturday. By Monday (just a week ago) it was determined that the shattered shoulder would require major surgery for which Mom was not a candidate. After considering several options, it was agreed, with Mom's full agreement, not to seek aggressive treatment. Two palliative care physicians took over her medical issues, found her a private room, removed monitors and aggressive medications and provided just enough medication to keep her comfortable. She and her daughters and a number of grandchildren kept a constant vigil with her. Thursday was the last day she was responsive and that day began with Holy Communion provided by Bonnie's pastor, who was a vicar in New Orleans at Mom and Dad' church 25 years ago! Friday afternoon she simply stopped breathing and went with the angels to heaven. Judy arrived home early this morning and is doing well! Thank you for all the kind wishes and prayers! They are so appreciated. Judy and I will be leaving for New Orleans on the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> and will return on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

***“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”***

(Jn 11:25-26)

Pastor K