Quinquagesima - Following the Death of my father Rev. Carl F. Thrun
Rolling Meadows - 1970

IN NOMINE JESU

I Corinthians 13: 12,13 FOR NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR DIMLY, BUT THEN FACE TO FACE NOW I KNOW IN PART; THEN I SHALL UNDERSTAND FULLY, EVEN AS I HAVE BEEN FULLY UNDERSTOOD. SO FAITH, HOPE, LOVE ABIDE, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

What a marvelous past two weeks! I cannot describe it any other way. The marvelous mercy of our gracious God was everywhere to be found. His radiant glory - His PEACE WHICH PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING - His strength in our weakness - that shown forth on every side like the splendor of the rising sun.

As I say, I have been marvelously blessed — to be with my mother and sister as together we stood vigil at the death bed of my father. It was a vigil that lasted for nearly a ~~full~~ week. Certainly tensions and emotions ran high. Certainly tears flooded our eyes. Certainly it is no easy task to stand helplessly by while your dad is dying. Yet always in the background were these great, comforting words of the apostle: NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR DIMLY, BUT THEN FACE TO FACE. NOW I KNOW IN PART; THEN I SHALL UNDERSTAND FULLY, EVEN AS I HAVE BEEN FULLY UNDERSTOOD. SO FAITH, HOPE, LOVE ABIDE, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

Faith, Hope, Love abide!

"Faith" was there! "Dad, nothing else matters now but your FAITH in your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..... You must not let the thought or the sting of death make you afraid....Your Lord has gone before you into death....He will be there to go with you into Paradise.....Hold on to Him.....Cling to Him..... He is the GOOD SHEPHERD WHO ~~LAYS~~ LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.....Dad, He has BORNE YOUR SINS IN HIS OWN BODY.... He has REMOVED THEM AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST .....Your faith must hold on to Him now.....You must listen to Him when He says, 'I am the Good Shepherd → 'MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME; AND I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE.'"

"Faith" was there! The last audible thing dad was able to pray with me was the 23rd Psalm: "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I SHALL NOT WANT." I prayed slowly, and he followed as best he could. When we got to the end, ~~his~~ dad's voice rose to a pitch and resonance I shall never forget: "SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE, AND I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER!"

"Faith" was there. Again and again we would pray the old parting prayer of the Church: "Lord Jesus Christ, You alone are the door to everlasting life. Open the door for him. God the Father who has created you, God the Son who by His blood has redeemed you, God the Holy Spirit who by Baptism has sanctified your body to be His temple, bring you home safe to Paradise. Angels carry you home and grant you with Lazarus eternal rest in the bosom of Abraham." Up until the last day, he would always squeeze my hand in recognition that he heard. On that final, ~~good Friday~~ Thursday when his hands were so swallen that he could no longer squeeze he somehow managed to wrinkle his eyebrows in recognition.

"Hope" was there too. Always there seemed to be those majestic and magnificent words of the Apostle Peter: "BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST! BY HIS GREAT MERCY WE HAVE BEEN BORN ANEW TO A LIVING HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD, AND TO AN INHERITANCE WHICH IS IMPERISHABLE, UNDEFILED, AND UNFADING, KEPT IN HEAVEN FOR YOU!"

"Hope" was there. It was there in the Funeral Service... It was there in the comforting, hope-filled sermon by dad's pastor, Dr. Buchheimer. Never have I heard a more Heaven-inspired sermon... ~~It~~ Hope was there in the triumphant, expectant singing of the congregation:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
The strife is o'er, the battle done;
Now is the Victor's triumph won;
Now be the song of praise begun. Alleluia!

Death's mightiest pow'rs have done their worst,
And Jesus hath His foes dispersed;
Let shouts of praise and joy outburst. Alleluia!

Lord, by the stripes which wounded Thee,
From death's dread sting Thy servants free
That we may live and sing to Thee. Alleluia!

"Hope" was there, when through misty eyes which were not seeing too clearly, we raised our voices to sing:

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confest,
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine,
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine,
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

"Hope" was there, when my brother-in-law stood to sing - God alone knows how he did it - God alone gave him the strength. His voice was the instrument of heaven itself:

Be Thou my Consolation,
My Shield, when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion
When my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold thee.
Who dieth thus dies well.

"Hope" was there, when Dr. A. R. Kretzmann spoke the words at the Committal Service - over the open grave: "FORASMUCH AS IT HATH PLEASED ALMIGHTY GOD, IN HIS WISE PROVIDENCE, TO TAKE OUT OF THIS WORLD THE SOUL OF OUR DEPARTED BROTHER, WE THEREFORE COMMIT HIS BODY TO THE GROUND; EARTH TO EARTH, ASHES TO ASHES, DUST TO DUST; IN THE SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION TO ETERNAL LIFE, THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

At that moment my mind somehow drifted to the words of the "Te Deum Laudamus" I saw dad seeing his Lord "FACE TO FACE." I heard the great choirs of heaven chanting:

We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.
To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein;
To Thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry:
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.
The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise Thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee.

Dad was there, seeing "FACE TO FACE" what I still had to "SEE IN A MIRROR DIMLY." He "UNDERSTOOD FULLY" what I could only "KNOW IN PART." Suddenly shivers went up and down my ~~back~~ spine and my knees shook uncontrollably.

"Faith" and "Hope" were there - but most important, "LOVE" was there. I understand now why St. Paul called "love" the greatest of the three.

There is no ministry without love!

"Love" was there in the hospital. The loving care given to dad was beyond description, above and beyond the call of duty! Nurses and orderlies went out of their way to make him comfortable. They stopped in their tracks whenever I would go in to talk to dad and pray with him.....Our Christian doctor called at late hours to summon us back to the hospital, when dad took another turn for the worse.

I thought of the ministry of our Lord - how He cared about people - how He healed the blind man on the way to Jericho when He was whighed down with the thoughts of His own death - how His only concern was to help other people - how He wept at the grave of Lazarus. His was a LOVE BEYOND MEASURE. He died that we might have the assurance of everlasting life. His LOVE knew no ending. It is beyond all telling!

The best we can do is feebly reflect that LOVE! But what a marvelous reflection of such Christ-like love - compassion - concern, when hundreds of cards, letters, telephone calls came to my mother during these past days. People flew in from all over the country to attend the funeral. Many drove icy, treacherous roads for hundreds of miles to be there. It was all done in the Name of Love! It was their way of saying, "We care!" And how like our Lord! He suffered all things, even death, that we might be His own forever and ever!

Surely that is our hope and consolation! NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR DIMLY! But we look ahead to the day when we shall see FACE TO FACE. Then HE WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM OUR EYES, AND DEATH SHALL BE NO MORE, NEITHER SHALL THERE BE MOURNING NOR CRYING NOR PAIN ANY MORE. Only His Love will remain. And we shall rejoice and be glad! Amen.