

GOSPEL: John 14:1-6

Jesus said to his disciples,

"Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Have faith in God and faith in me."

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places;

otherwise, how could I have told you

that I was going to prepare a place for you?

I am indeed going to prepare a place for you,

and then I shall come back to take you with me,

that where I am you also may be.

You know the way that leads where I go."

"Lord," said Thomas,

"we do not know where you are going.

How can we know the way?"

Jesus told Thomas:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life;

no one comes to the Father but through me."

**It is a custom for the Marianist community in Cupertino to gather after the death of one of our fellow brothers to thank God for his life,
to pray confidently for his eternal life
and to reflect on the impact his life had on us.**

Father David Schuyler died peacefully early in the morning of November 19 and on the 21st, our evening prayer in honor of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary included a sharing of anecdotes about Father Dave's life and ministry.

When I was asked to be the homilist for this mass of Christian burial notes from that evening prayer came back to me quite vividly. Even more than that, however, the words of the gospel we have just heard dominated my prayer and reflection the past few days.

**There are three points in this gospel that I want to comment on this morning:
the gift of peace,
the hope for eternal life,
the centrality of Christ in our lives.**

**First, the calming words of Jesus:
*Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me."***

**One of the most striking features of Father Dave's life was the gift of speaking and writing remarkably well – and seemingly, effortlessly. He was articulate and eloquent – and above all, calm. The words of Jesus "*Have faith in me*" were obviously effective in his life. It was as though he heard Jesus saying
"Be at peace, don't be disturbed, don't worry!
It's all right - I'm here - trust God - trust me!
I thought about this when I observed the calm way that he accepted the doctor's judgment that his battle for life was coming to an end. Instead of withdrawing into himself, he came home from the hospital and welcomed visitors until he gently slept away, as he had hoped for.**

In visiting him in those last days, I always found him welcoming and alert, even as he found it more and more difficult to speak clearly. His was a powerful witness that he believed in the words of Jesus and did not let his heart be troubled, even though he knew he was nearing the end of the journey.

Secondly, the hope for eternal life.

Jesus said

***"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places...
I am indeed going to prepare a place for you,
and then I shall come back to take you with me,
that where I am you also may be.***

In reflecting on these words of Jesus, I am tempted to begin to imagine those many dwelling places.

But I think the more important note is activity.

Jesus says that he has work to do to prepare a place for his disciples.

The implication, I believe, is that the disciples have work to do as well.

Our program states that in his last years

Father Dave was "in retirement in Cupertino"

In an effort to remove the word retirement from our vocabulary we prefer to speak about a change in ministry.

We don't do what we did before,

**but we continue to relate to people in many ways
- by visits, phone calls, letters, emails.**

And relating to people is what ministry is all about.

Father Dave had a varied ministry -

in the tribunal offices in Honolulu and San Jose,

membership on boards and province committees,

serving as president of Chaminade University in Hawaii

- and the last three years in leadership

of our Cupertino Marianist community,

helping us to age gracefully.

Throughout this period some persist in calling "retirement"

Father Dave excelled in selecting and sending greeting cards to back up his visits, phone calls and emails

which were all marvelous expressions of encouragement.

Moreover he was always available as a spiritual director, confessor or consultant on canonical affairs.

He was especially interested in our younger brothers and supported them by his friendship.

One of our Brothers commented that Hallmark and the US Postal Service joined us in mourning his passing.

Our Founder, Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, used to remind his followers that we are all missionaries - all of us and always - until our last breath.

This sense of mission

may be the most important element in aging gracefully.

Thirdly, the centrality of Christ in our lives.

Jesus told Thomas:

***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
no one comes to the Father but through me."***

Father Dave had many interests -

**he was a sports fan, loved reading, collected stamps
and enjoyed life in community and with his family.**

We elders are grateful for the gift of years.

We know by our own experience

**and by observing those with whom we live
that the last years of life are the most formative years.**

We grow by letting go.

That sounds so easy, and yet it is a challenge.

As physical life fades away we continue to grow spiritually.

Priorities are more clear.

Life is simplified.

We focus more on the essentials.

We see things in a different perspective.

And the key point, I believe,

is that Christ must become the central person in life.

In calling Father Dave to Himself,

God has called us together to celebrate a great act of hope.

**By gathering here this morning we proclaim our belief
that by death, life is changed, not taken away.**

We place our complete confidence in the words of Jesus:

"I am the Resurrection.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live."

May we always hear Jesus speaking to us:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Have faith in God and faith in me."