

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



## **Catholic Community**

**Member of the English-Speaking Mission**

**Mass: Fridays at 6 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel**

**Sundays at 10 a.m. in the main Sanctuary**

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Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays 10-12

**July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Celebrant: Fr Wolfgang Felber**

**Readings (Missal p 179 et seqq.): Zech 9:9-10 • Ps 145:1-2, 8-11, 13-14 • Rom 8:9, 11-13 • Mt 11:25-30**

### **Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

As a kid, I often daydreamed about dying a heroic death. Especially with the rise of atheistic Communism in the late 40s and early 50s, I imagined being martyred for my faith. That kind of death best imitated the deaths of the saints I frequently heard about in my catechism classes and the pastor's Sunday sermons. And, more than anything, it mirrored the unjust death Jesus endured for all of us.

But the older I got, the more I began to understand there are deaths, and then there are deaths. Though, as Paul reminds the Romans in today's second reading, all of us are expected to "die with Christ," few of us will actually be martyred because of our faith. The vast majority will live rather humdrum lives and our obituaries won't contain any "front page" material. That's why today's first and third readings are so important. They were written for us "humdrummers."

According to both the author of II Kings and Matthew, one way to die is to help those people of faith who aren't experiencing such a colorless life – especially prophets. Since, by nature, individuals who minister as the conscience of the people aren't normally received with open arms by the majority of the "faithful," one risks a lot by helping them. Yet that's exactly what the unnamed Shunemite woman does for Elisha and also what Matthew's Jesus encourages us to do for the prophets in our midst. Of course, according to both authors, we can anticipate some sort of compensation for identifying with such community outcasts. Elisha, for instance, promises the childless woman a son, and the gospel Jesus assures us, "Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward."

Lest we're limited only to surfacing and helping prophets, that same gospel also mentions other ways to die. "Whoever receives a righteous person because she or he is righteous will receive a righteous person's reward." And on an even broader level, "Those who give only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because that little one is a disciple – amen, I say to you, they will surely not lose their reward."

But perhaps the broadest way to die is contained in the classic biblical contradiction, "Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my (Jesus') sake will find it."

Almost 50 years ago the well-known theologian Fr. David Tracy delivered a lecture at St. Louis University's Divinity School which still "haunts" me. Entitled "The Limitations of Theological Language", it explored the impossibility of referring to God and our relationship with such an infinite person in language we finite humans can actually understand. Tracy's conclusion: it's pretty nigh impossible to do that. We're often relegated to speaking about such life-changing experiences in contradictions. He employed the above quote about losing and finding one's life as an example.

Maybe that's the one way each of us can experience a daily martyrdom for our faith. We die to our own logic and agree to suffer the death of stepping into God's contradictions. By doing so, we're actually imitating Jesus' martyrdom for us.

During his earthly ministry Jesus constantly gave himself for others, convinced it was the only way for anyone to experience God working effectively in their daily lives. Of course, as we all know, his selfless giving eventually led to the biggest faith contradiction of all: his crucifixion and resurrection.

At the last meal Jesus ate with his disciples before his Good Friday death, he pleaded with them to carry on his ministry. I presume only those who can live within contradictions are able to successfully pull that off.

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**Roger Vermalen Karban**

**Welcome to All Saints! Many of us are gone for the summer and return in August but would like to welcome you to our community.**

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