

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

RIDING WITH THE REAPER...

Recently after dinner at my mom's house in Sunnyside, I took a nice stroll through the neighborhood. It was a pleasant Fall evening, just before Halloween and there were many displays of jack-o-lanterns, ghosts, bats and various other "monsters." Heading down Van Cortland Avenue, however, I was nearly jolted out of my skin as right in front of me was this life size "skeleton man" straddling a motorcycle on someone's front lawn.

As I passed, his eyes lit up and a ghoulish voice from the skeleton proclaimed, "Sooner or later, we all ride with the reaper!" I guess he meant the "Grim Reaper." That certainly got my attention! In Folklore, the "Grim Reaper" represents death and is pictured as a skeleton with a scythe in hand. He comes to collect the dead. Not a pleasant subject to think about. However, we all know that death is a part of life.

During this month of November where nature all around is wilting and dying, the Church wants us to reflect a little about our loved ones who have departed this life. During the month of November, we celebrate All Saints Day (November 1) and then, the very next day, All Souls Day, we pray in a special way for the holy souls in purgatory who need our intercession.

The Church also teaches that there are "four last things." What are the four last things? Death, judgement, heaven and hell. Again, not things that we usually like to think about! Yet, it is really good for us to reflect upon a very significant fact- that life is short and really offers us no assurances.

Last month as most of us remember, there was a tragic limousine crash in upstate New York. The crash took the lives of 20 people, mainly young people. At the funeral Mass at Saint Stanislaus Church in Amsterdam, New York, the pastor Father O. Robert DeMartinis tried to address the question of why twenty souls were taken too soon.

Ironically, Father DeMartinis had officiated at the wedding of one of the couples who had perished in the crash-Amy and Axel Steenburg. As part of his homily, the priest showed a painted sign that the couple had made and had accidentally left behind after their wedding some months before. The sign read, "Please no pictures." There was an image of a camera with a slash through it. Below the camera was a message, "We suggest you live in the moment." Father DeMartinis concluded, "As difficult as it may be, we must live in the present moment."

The Lord Jesus Christ put it this way: "Do not worry about tomorrow, it will take care of itself. Sufficient for the day is its own evil." This is good psychology from the divine teacher. Many of us make the mistake of either thinking about things in the past- a past which is gone forever or we project into the future, a future that in reality we have no control over.

What we do have control over is the "now moment" and the conduct of our lives. It's often been said that there's nothing more certain than death and taxes. We know that death is something that we all have to face sooner or later. Yes, there will be a judgement at the end of our days. But we need not fear that judgement if we have lived good, holy and moral lives.

Even if we have to "ride with the reaper" that ride will be safe if we are in the loving arms of Jesus!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome