

**06/28/15 ..... 14B**

-- Mike Hay was one year behind me in college at St. Meinrad back in 1973. He was from Norwalk, and he was very talented, both academically and as a musician.

-- Coming back to St. Meinrad from home after Thanksgiving, his car was rear-ended by a semi while it was sitting at a railroad crossing. The passenger next to him was killed, and he was critically injured.

-- For a while he was paralyzed, and he struggled through rehab to gain some use of his legs back. After several months, he was able to drive, and he returned to finish college a year late.

-- He could not continue on to priesthood, but he became a liturgy director in Chicago and ministered in that position for quite a number of years. But bad health caught up with him and he had to return to Norwalk. He died there when he was in his mid-40's.

-- I'm reminded of him when I read this story about Jesus raising the daughter of the synagogue official. She was on the cusp of becoming a woman, in the prime of life, when illness cut her down.

-- Jesus gave her a second chance, and comforted her family in the process. Eventually, though, she would die. Perhaps, like many women of that time, she died in childbirth. Or, she may have been lucky and seen her grandchildren. But death would get her in the end, as it got Mike Hay.

-- In the gospels, we see Jesus as one who is there for people in need. Whether it's the daughter of an important man like Jairus, or an impoverished woman considered unclean, he reaches out, touching people and allowing himself to be touched.

-- He struggles along with people who are hurting physically, mentally or spiritually. He fights the power of death. He is not worried about being considered ritually unclean. He brings healing to many people.

-- But we know he did not solve the massive health problems of his day. And even those he gave healing to would face additional challenges in life. He was well aware of that.

-- Still, he continued to offer his healing touch. And he showed us that God's desire is that we be freed from the power of death. Eventually we will be freed from physical death.

-- But God offers us freedom from spiritual death right now. He nourishes us with the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation. He gives us his word which shows us the way to freedom from the powers which bring spiritual death to us.

-- Those powers are all too alive when we witness events such as the shootings at the Church in Charlestown, S.C., where a minister and several members of his congregation were murdered.

-- But, even in cases like this, Jesus invites Christians to be instruments of his healing, as many have been there. Often, we can exercise that power simply by a smile or a word of encouragement.

-- Jesus' power over sin and death did not end with his return to the Father in heaven. It lives on in his Church, in the people who try to follow his way faithfully.

-- Yes, we may not eliminate all or even many of the death-dealing forces in our world. But, when we treat each other as people made in God's image (which, in fact, we are), we are bringing God's life into the world.

-- And the power of death is not as strong because of our faith.