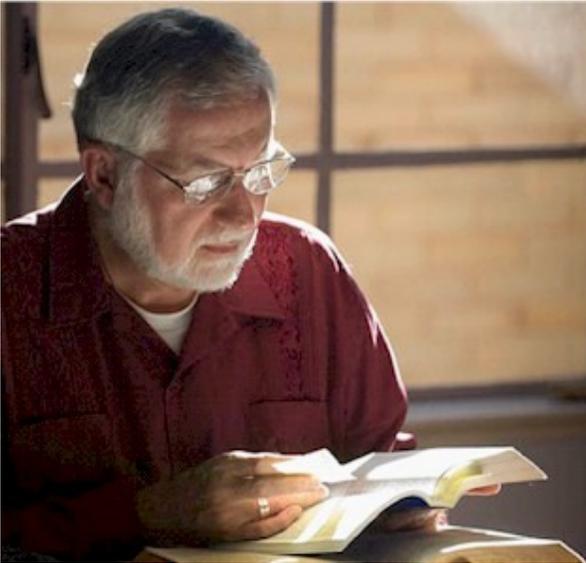


## Thoughts of Hope, by Fr. Dennis Wait

October 11, 2010



Yesterday I was driving thru the neighborhood and began to look at the fall colors that were right here. I could see the brilliant reds of the burning bushes, the yellows and oranges of the tall oaks, against their fading greens. At Sanctuary of Hope, walking the south area, I saw the field that banks the statue of Jesus, turning these same colors with yellow butterflies landing on the bushes and plants. The ground was dry and I could see the foliage and grass turning brown as well. It was a sunny day, but cool in the shaded areas.

When I was in vocation work for the archdiocese, I remember a homily I gave about the fall. I told the men, our seminarians, that when nature is ready to die, it turns its most beautiful colors. It is like a summation of all that has gone before to make such beauty. I remember telling the men that it is the same for us, when we die. At the moment of death, we sum up our entire life, with all the colors of experiences that have made it so, and give it all back to God. So death isn't so much something that happens to us, but rather it is our supreme moment of surrender, of entrusting our whole self and all that we hold into the hands of God. It is our YES, like Mary's Magnificat!



Remember at Calvary, no one took Jesus' life, rather He entrusted it to the Father with the words: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit...and then gave up his spirit." There is a huge difference between someone who takes their life out of fear, depression or indifference and one who surrenders their life to God. They tell us that to watch a person die is one of the most profound privileges of our lives. I have heard people say that when their loved one was dying, they saw the pain, but also the joy in them return, time and time again. It was like they were teaching them how to die, from the wealth of what they lived on this earth. It reminds me of Pope John Paul II, who did the same for the world.

Seen this way, death is the natural process of our lives, no matter at what age it might come. Yes, evil actions can speed it up, but God is much quicker than a speeding bullet or a fast moving cancer or whatever else might attack us. Sometimes even heroic actions move us quickly along, when we actually give our lives for another or for the faith or for some cause that is beyond us!

It causes me to reflect on my life today seen in these terms of surrender. Will I be willing to entrust my life to the Father, like Jesus did on the cross, when that time comes for me? Sometimes I think about people at my bed side (God willing that I die this way) and what I want to say to

them. I think of how grateful I am for all that has been given to me and the many incredible people that have touched my life and that I have had the privilege to touch as well.



Gratitude is a key to me in this whole process of dying. I know there will be tears, but hopefully, tears of joy too. I have been so immersed in community that I even joke that it would be good to go with some others too and not alone. But I sense that when we die, when we are ready to see all the colors of our lives (De Colores of Cursillo), the graces God has bestowed upon us, the talents we have been given, the memories that will flood our being, we will not be alone.

We will hear the song of the birds, the angels will come. People that we have loved on this earth will appear too, the door of death will

open, the veil pierced. We will see Jesus, Mary, favorite saints coming to us, “on earth as it is in heaven,” the beauty will be blinding except to those who have had the courage to give of themselves every day.

I conclude with the words of Jesus, from John 16th, all about His departure: “Amen, amen I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices, you will grieve, but your grief will become joy...and no one will take your joy away from you...Amen, amen I say to you whatever you ask the Father in my name He will give to you...ask and you will receive, so that your joy will be complete.”