

**Catholic Church of the Beatitudes
Santa Barbara, CA**

Thirteenth Sunday of Pentecost—Year B
July 1, 2018

Mary Becker

Reflections on **Wisdom 1:1,4,6-7;13-15;2:23;**
Corinthians II 3:1-3,6a,4:1-2,5-6; Mark 5:21-43

God protects us from nothing - but sustains us in everything.

Three months ago I was assigned to give today's homily. After Gary died last week, I looked at the readings for the day. Had I realized what my state of mind would be, I very well might have asked for alternate readings. . . or for another date entirely.

But. . . here goes.

Did you notice how often the words "live" and "life" occur in today's readings? Including the Psalm, they appeared ten times.

And what about all the references to healing and wellness? I counted six or seven. The gospel especially speaks of those concepts.

So. . . just at a time when I am thinking and praying over the death of Gary, I'm invited to reflect on the altogether different realities of health and life.

I wonder if you have ever prayed for a loved one to be healed, or to recover from a serious illness? I'm sure that every single person in this church has done that. I think of Francie praying for her grandson, and Claudia for her sister, and Suzanne for her brother-in-law, and

all of us praying for Geri Freeman, and for Colleen's grandnephew. And these are just a few recent examples. I'm sure there are many, many others, just here in our small community. It's human nature for us to pray to God for our loved ones to be restored to the fullness of their lives.

I prayed every single day over the last three years for Gary to be restored to his vibrant, healthy, dynamic self.

Think back to a time when you have prayed for someone who was gravely ill. And take a minute of silence to recall that memory—the details and the emotional tone of it.

How often have the prayers you've said for your loved ones' healing been answered? I expect that some of you have seen some amazing healings. Perhaps you've successfully prayed for the healing of someone like the bleeding woman in today's gospel. It may even be that you've experienced a loved one's recovery that was almost as dramatic as the young girl in today's gospel.

And. . . I imagine that there have been even *more* instances when your beloved

person did not recover—did not get well, and did not live.

So. . . What are we to do? Are most of our prayers futile? Do we hope in vain for life and good health for ourselves and our loved ones? Where is God when our loved ones are hurting, and we are suffering with them?

But I wonder. . . Have you ever offered soothing words and loving care to an ill person? Have you ever watched a loved one relax into a deep sleep after struggling against great pain? Have you ever said to yourself: *I've done all I possibly can for this dear person?*

Have you ever experienced a calm, peaceful acceptance in the face of a beloved's death?

Well—I believe that all those ways are how God is with us when we or our beloveds are ill and at the point of death.

Recently, a wise person told me this: ***God protects us from nothing, but sustains us in everything.*** (Repeat)

Here is another way of looking at all this: It may just be that our imaginations are way too small and limited to envision the fullness of life that God has for us. Remember the words of our gathering song: “Eye has not seen, ear

has not heard, what God has ready for those who love—.”

We think of life as the time we spend on Earth. We believe our lives end when we die and our souls leave our earthly bodies.

Yet. . . as followers of Jesus, we really ought to take seriously what he said about life after death. Jesus talked constantly about the kingdom of Heaven to his followers. He told them over and over that they would have abundant, everlasting life—everlasting life! Do we believe that?

I've received many cards and emails and notes of condolence in the past week. Ginny sent a card and in it she wrote something Father Virgil once said. This is what he said:

When we die we don't “rest in peace.” Rather, we spend eternity exploring the mind of God. Ginny added: “That's terrific for Gary”! Well—I think that's terrific for every one of us.

So—take heart. Have faith. God is with us in our problems and our illnesses and in our limited understanding and our dying. God will bring us home to a life beyond death that is vast and expansive. . . and interesting and fine.