

As many of you know, my earthly father, AJ, died last Friday, April 11 at 3 p.m. here, 5 p.m. at his home in Howell Michigan — just where he wanted to be when his life ended. Just ten minutes before, the pastor of dad's parish arrived at the house to offer pastoral care. Fr. Gary had been there several days before to offer dad the anointing of the sick.

Because Fr. Gary is such a caring priest, he also asked dad if he wanted to make a last confession, for what a supreme gift it is to know the peace of God's mercy, especially at the end of one's life! My dad was not prepared for this and so he said he was not ready for a confession at that time. Then Fr. Gary gently encouraged dad, that he'd want this sacrament of mercy before he "went away."

So, back to April 11, the day of dad's death, Fr. Gary again visited dad. This time dad was mostly unable to speak so confession was no longer possible in the normal manner. However, Fr. Gary drew close to dad and, acknowledging that dad's time was quickly approaching, asked him to put his faith in Jesus by saying, "Do you want what Jesus has for you?" to which Dad assented with a nod and, and apparently, a labored "yes." He breathed his last in this world within ten minutes — by all measures a beautiful death.

On this Easter night, let's be clear — what does Jesus have for us? Let's allow Jesus himself to answer this question. To find this answer, we go not to tonight's Gospel, from the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke but instead to the 11th chapter of John, the recounting of the Raising of Lazarus. Recall that Lazarus has already died by the time Jesus arrives. Jesus first meets Lazarus' sister Martha, who laments that Jesus could have saved Lazarus from death. When Jesus reassures her that "Your brother will rise again" (Jn 11:23), Martha concedes that Lazarus will "rise on the resurrection on the last day" (Jn 11:34), after which Jesus then replies with puzzling words, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live..." (Jn 11:25).

So, why do I call these puzzling words? Because Jesus does not say what might be expected, something like "I will raise him," but instead speaks of himself, his identity. "I am the resurrection and the life," he says. Literally, Jesus' identity is one who raises the dead to life." He is the resurrection and the life!

Back to my father and Fr. Gary's question: "Do you want what Jesus has for you?" What Jesus had for dad and for each of us is his identity: the resurrection and the life. That's what Jesus has for us!

In this evening's Gospel, Jesus' identity as "the resurrection and the life" is confirmed. Specifically, we are told by the angels who meet women seeking to anoint the body of the Lord "on the first day of the week," that "he is not here," the angels say. "But he has been raised."

Raised. The word in the original Biblical language is *egeiró*, a word that appears 18 times in the Gospel of Luke, 144 times in all the New Testament. It's used to describe how Jesus raises up things. He raises up the sick, restores Lazarus to life. He rises and goes on his mission and, ultimately, the word is used to describe Jesus' own resurrection. We see by this wide use that, in many of Jesus' acts, he is one who raises to life. He is a "raiser." Yes, he is the resurrection and the life! It is his name, his identity. He is the resurrection. He is the life! That's what he has for us, his very self, for he is the resurrection and the life!

One more act of raising, if you will permit me! On Good Friday, when Jesus was praying with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, his betrayers arrive. Immediately, knowing that he will be taken to his crucifixion and death, he turns to his disciples and says yes, who He is, and who we are. He says, "Rise, let us be on our way." Or as in the original Biblical language, *egeiresthe agōmen*. *Egeiresthe* — the same word used by the angels to describe his resurrection; he now commands us to do. Rise! And *agōmen* — let's go on our way, our way of the resurrection. He is the resurrection, and he invites us to go with him along his way to that same resurrection.

Brothers and sisters, these are not merely just intellectual musings! Last week, when dad died, he was offered what Jesus has, the resurrection, and dad chose Jesus' way and received the promised resurrection through faith as a gift from Jesus. The same gift is given to us tonight, specifically in the bread broken for us. The very same resurrected Body given to us as the definitive, perfect remedy for our mortality. The very same resurrected body that the disciples saw after the resurrection. That's what Jesus has for us. Eternal, resurrected life for you and for me right here at this altar.