

Second Sunday After Pentecost
Proper 5, Year C
The Rev. Dr. Kevin J. Moroney

It is ironic that my children's sermon series on the sacraments concludes today with "anointing for healing" on the same day that two of the readings deal with the subject of healing, and in dramatic fashion. The prophet Elijah raised a widow's son from death and Jesus did the same.

Now in some ways the ancient world was a very different place than our world. In order to be established as a great prophet, a great miracle had to be attributed to you. So throughout the Bible these stories, which defy rational explanation, keep occurring in order to establish the credibility of Elijah, Jesus and many others.

The underlying message is that God has the power of life and death and God gives a share of this power to his greatest servants. A rather foreign concept to we modern, rational people.

But in other ways the ancient world was not much different than our own. When you lose someone you love you want them back, like those two widows in today's readings, and if your life's path happens to bring you in contact with an Elijah or Jesus, who has the power to alter events, then God bless you.

Most of us, however, have to trust in less certain outcomes.

The subject of healing is a very difficult one, and it is one that has been recently hitting me quite personally. When Rose limped up the sidewalk after Yoga six weeks ago and told me she had dislocated her knee, my first fear was ligament damage and surgery and rehab. All that with a 3 year old and a 1 year old to deal with. So you can imagine our relief the next Monday when the MRI showed that there were no tears and that simple rest and rehab would get her back to full strength, and right now she is almost back to full strength. Thanks be to God.

But when my sister called me 4 weeks ago to say that Dad was in the hospital but that I shouldn't worry because it looked like they just had to straighten out his medication, I wasn't worried at all because those things happen all the time to 87 year olds. But as most of you know, he declined very quickly because, in fact, the dizziness was due to a loss of weight, not a medication problem, because he hadn't been swallowing, and I got down there just in time to say goodbye.

This is a difficult subject because in the Bible we have these miraculous recoveries while in our lives some people recover and some people don't. But in 18 years of priestly ministry I have learned to make a distinction that has been immensely helpful; a distinction between recovery and healing.

Why? Because we know that some recover and some don't, but everybody can be healed, if healing is understood as peace with God, our loved ones and ourselves. And, believe me, that is what is ultimately important.

And I could give you dozens of examples from over the years, but I experienced it most recently with my dad, so let me tell you about it.

But first, I have to tell you a bit about the Moroney family. Like a lot of Irish families, we all THINK we are great singers. So when things were not going well for my Dad, my brother flew down first, and Dad perked up a bit because my brother and he sat and sang the old family favorites, culminating, of course, in "Danny Boy."

Well, when I flew down that's what I wanted to do too, but when I got there he had suddenly declined so when he saw me, he just put his hands together, knowing that I would realize that what he wanted me to do with him was pray.

So we prayed our favorite prayers, the Lord Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be and the 23rd psalm, everything we knew. And when I had run out, Dad kept right on praying until he got too tired, and then he simply fell

asleep. Then, for the next 24 hours, he was very peaceful. He was not going to recover, but believe me he was healed.

I realize that, to some, this distinction between recovery and healing may seem like some sort of rationalization. But I've seen it 100 times if I've seen it once, and I guarantee you that any priest or minister, and probably most doctors and nurses, know exactly what I'm talking about.

The state of the soul is of greater importance than the state of the body. Both are important, but it is the state of our soul that will carry us when our bodies cannot.

What I'm trying to say is that, in the midst of the grieving I know that both my wife and my Dad are well again, and for that I am profoundly thankful. We cannot always control these quirky bodies of ours, but we can always have healing through entrusting ourselves to God in Jesus Christ. Amen.