

**FATHER MARK SCHULTE HOMILY**  
**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**  
**June 27, 2021**  
**“Why Death?”**

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No one enjoys contemplating the reality of death and dying. Nevertheless, that same reality, that each of us will one day die and leave this world, is inescapable. Some may try to avoid the thought of death, but its reminders are all around us. Our loved ones get sick, sometimes seriously sick. Our grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends and neighbors slowly advance in age around us, including ourselves, as much as we hate to admit it. And then there is the occasional funeral that we attend. But up to this point it has always been about someone else, the other guy.

Our countryside can remind us of the reality of death as we drive by cemeteries both large and small. There is the community cemetery with its row upon row of headstones and its winding roads. There is the small family plot off in a distance in the middle of a field and just for a moment we ponder what family that small, almost forgotten cemetery plot belongs to.

We even have national holidays that draw our attention to the fact that people die, such as Memorial Day. From a religious perspective, there are the various feast days of the saints of long ago who died. And then ultimately there is Good Friday, the day we remember that our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died.

From time to time, we might ask ourselves: “Why do people die?” “Why is there death in the world?”

For many in the world these questions can seem unanswerable, but the believer, the Christian, should have an understanding of why people, even good people die. God has given this understanding through His sacred word, sacred scripture.

From the Book of Wisdom, we read today that, “God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living.” “God made man to be imperishable, in the image of his own nature.” (Wis 1:13-15; 2:23-34)

God is immortal and He made man to be immortal as well, that is, to live on forever. So, what happened? If we were made immortal, why must we die? That same passage goes on to say that: “by the envy of the devil death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it (death)”. Our sin puts us in the possession of the devil.

The Apostle Paul was even more explicit. He said: “Just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to all men in as much as all sinned”. So, we see that sin is the cause of death. Paul is making a direct reference to the sin of Adam, the first of all sins and we call it original sin. Adam’s sin damaged the original immortal nature of man (Rom 5:12-21) (CCC 396-412).

We were made in the image and likeness of God – we had a sharing in His immortal nature. The sin of Adam broke that “sharing” temporarily while we live in this world. As Paul said, even nature is subject to death as a result of Adam’s sin (Rom 8:19-22).

You may say: “Well, that was Adam’s sin, I didn’t sin – why should I die?” Adam is the father in the flesh of all humanity – all humanity sprung from him. His sin has a direct effect

on all his descendants. It is almost like a genetic defect that is passed from a father to his son, and then to his son, and on and on...from one generation to the next. Adam's sin is a defect that all of us share in.

It is a little bit like the saying: "All ships rise with the tide, and all ships go down with the tide". Even though the ships themselves have nothing to do with the tide, they are still affected by it.

And so, death is in the world because sin is in the world. But God does not leave us defenseless against the effects of sin and death (Jn 14:1-31).

Jesus is the answer to all of this. When Jesus came, He cured many people of their diseases. We see examples of this in the Gospel passage; the woman with the hemorrhage, the synagogue official whose child was dying, and there were many others (Mk 5:21-43).

Physical disease is a precursor, a sign of death and the effects of dying. Jesus cured them all. He could cure them because He has power over death and the effects of death and dying. He is God, the author of all life.

However, diseases in themselves do not separate us from God, only sin can separate us from God. Sin is the cause of death, and therefore disease is only a sign of dying.

Jesus came to remedy the root cause of death which is sin.

Just as the Apostle Paul said, sin and therefore death came into the world through one man – life comes to us as a grace and gift of the one man, Jesus Christ (Rom 5).

- The price of sin is death.
- Jesus paid that price by freely choosing to die for us. Through faith in Him, we become immortal once again and will never die.
- If we die in this world faithful to Jesus Christ, we will then become immortal, living forever with Him in eternal life in heaven.
- The Christian is not afraid of death because Jesus has conquered death and the devil for us.

The cemetery is not the end as some might believe. It is only a temporary staging point for the body, which will be united with its soul at the resurrection to live on forever immortal once again. Jesus is in heaven with his glorified body as well.

The immortality that was lost by Adam's sin is restored back to us through the freely chosen death of Jesus Christ; this is why He is called "Savior".

Sooner or later, a person comes face to face with eternal realities.

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What is the meaning of life and death, the real meaning, the meaning that matters?

Only the Church can provide answers to these kinds of questions. There is no scientific formula or worldly philosophy capable of doing this.