

My dear Little Flower,

There is something I heard once in a movie-series that I was watching that stuck with me, which says: *Heaven is not heaven when one's loved one is not in it.*

We have come to the end of our journey as a community celebrating October as *Respect Life Month*. This week, while we look into the future of our journey, we recognize the gift of Christian Hope. The goal is to lift up our spirits - to look forward - to see a future in light of God's promise. It is one of the good things about a pilgrimage and/or a journey, we know for a fact that we are always going somewhere no matter how long, arduous (and painful) the present journey might be. There is *always* something *better* to look forward to.

This week, we celebrate Christian Hope - we look into the necessary *transitions of life* - changes - that a follower of Christ might endure. In our Creed, clear and faithful to our destination, we say that *we believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting*. This is the will of the Father (cf. Jn 6:40) - the bigger picture, if you will - the ultimate direction of our present pilgrimage from where we garner our strength and hope to walk on and move forward amidst present life-struggles, pain and sufferings.

In our prayers for Funeral Mass, we pray with our priests: *In Jesus Christ*, "the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come..." That for those who are faithful and look forward to God's promise, "life is changed, not ended; and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for *them* in heaven" (Preface I for the Dead, *Roman Missal*). ***Ultimately, this pilgrimage will lead us to where God, the saints, and all our loved ones who have gone before will be!***

Our October *Respect Life Month* ties into our theme for Next Month. The beautiful month of November is a month that we as a parish community will pay attention to the Saints - and learn the unique way they lived out their pilgrimage *in light of the bigger picture and of God's promise*. We also remember and pray for the souls who are yet to find their way to Jesus Christ, while on their spiritual path of continued *purification and sanctification*.

Let us continue to make our Little Flower our little sanctuary of heaven on earth, where we walk as pilgrims and journey with our family - our community of faith - closer and closer to the heart of God, the Father.

Your parish priest,
Fr JC Merino