

Sr. Anastasia 50th Jubilee

When Sr. Anastasia was a student nurse, she worked in a post-surgical recovery room. A three-year old boy had been there several times for ear reconstruction, and had earned the reputation of being a bit difficult. Other nurses looked at their new student nurse, pointed at the child, and told her, “Take care of him.” That is what Sr. Anastasia did. Nothing extraordinary. She just did what nurses did. The child was asleep. She stayed by his side. She checked his vitals. When this difficult child woke up, he turned his head, and saw Sr. Anastasia at his side. Sister was prepared for the worst. Instead, the boy’s face brightened into a smile, like sunlight, shining with the power of God.

The image of that face inspired today’s selection of readings. The disciples had been unable to cure a very sick boy. They had too little faith. Jesus healed him. He told the disciples they could work such miracles if they used two tools: prayer and fasting. This happened right after the Transfiguration. Christ had revealed his glory. Now the disciples saw what that glory could achieve: miracles.

We have all experienced miracles in answer to some prayers. Those of us serving the church as priests, brothers and sisters get to see miracles more. It’s not our work; it is Christ at work. If we devote time to prayer and sacrifice, we see his wonders at the work of our hands. These events give us confidence each Sunday when we profess our faith. One of the words of our creed that puzzles people is “again”. We say that Jesus rose again. Some people ask, “Was that the second time that he rose?” The answer to this question is technical, but please bear with me. In Latin, the word for “rise” is *surgō*. The word for resurrection adds a prefix: *resurgō*, which looks like “rise again.” But Latin copied that prefix from Greek, where a similar prefix can mean either “again” or “above”. Jesus told Nicodemus you have to be born “from above” but Nicodemus thought he said, “born again” and wondered how you can be born a second time. The Greek word for standing or rising is *stasis*, and the Greek word for resurrection is *anastasis*. It means “rose above,” but in Latin and English we think like Nicodemus and say “rose again.”

The name Anastasia means “resurrection”. Sometimes in her work, Sr. Anastasia witnesses people recovering from illness: rising again. She also sees people who do not rise again from their beds, but with eyes of faith and a heart of hope, she believes that they will rise again to behold the face of God, the same face you can glimpse in the smile of a child.

On the day of her profession, Sr. Anastasia prayed the psalm we sang today: “How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me? The cup of salvation I will raise. A thanksgiving sacrifice I make. My vows to the Lord I will fulfill.” Sister Anastasia, your ministry has enriched you personally. Through your faith, prayer and sacrifices, you have seen God work miracles in people who are 3 and 103, and that has been enough. But all of us here, we have also benefited from the commitment you made to God. You have reawakened faith within us. In you we behold the transfiguration. We see the glory of God through the work of your hands. We do give thanks to God, but we also thank you, and congratulate you, Sister Anastasia Mary of St. Joseph, Little Sister of the Poor, for fifty years of service to the church and the world.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016