

Dr. Joseph Simone

When I was seven years old I nearly lost my left eye in an accident in my own back yard. The doctor who put three stitches in my eye and saved my vision at St. Luke's Hospital back in 1960 was named Padfield. Since then I've been through glasses and contacts and readers and trifocals and progressives. I've even had cataract surgery in that same eye, followed up by not one but two YAG treatments. Like all of you, I treasure the gift of sight.

Dr. Joe dedicated his life to helping people see. He started his career in mathematics, and he was successful, but he yearned for something more and took up the practice of medicine. For almost 30 years he practiced ophthalmology. We describe people like him as someone with a good heart. It's not fair that the very heart that helped many other people get a better life is the heart that failed Dr. Joe last Sunday in Garden City.

He had other worries - both personal and professional. In some ways he was like the hero in one of the most enigmatic books of the Old Testament, the Book of Job. Job was a just man enjoying a happy life when all of a sudden his familiar world collapsed around him. He lost his possessions, his family, and his friends. He entered a dialogue with some of his acquaintances to try to make sense out of the sorrows that befell him, and ultimately he had a one on one conversation with God. At the end, Job's fortunes were restored. A pivotal moment comes early in the book, the passage we heard as the first reading today. In conversation with Bildad, Job reveals that he may have lost many physical benefits, but he never lost his faith. He knows in the end, somehow, some way, God will take care of him. He says, "I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see." Like someone with a good ophthalmologist, Job says, "my own eyes, not another's shall behold him; And from my flesh I shall see God." Christians see in Job's statement a prophecy of Jesus Christ, who will come at last to stand upon the earth and make right again everything that once was wrong.

Dr. Joe was a husband and a father, a student and a teacher, a doctor and a patient. He will be missed by family, patients and professional colleagues. He was looking forward to a new beginning in Garden City. It did not work out the way he had in mind.

When Jesus arrived at the tomb of his friend Lazarus, people knew his reputation as a miracle worker. On this occasion, of all the miracles that Jesus had worked, what impressed them the most was the way he healed those who could not see. They said behind Jesus' back, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" Jesus then raised his eyes to heaven and prayed.

My brothers and sisters, we have lost a good man. At times like this we are tempted to focus only on loss as did the friends of Job. But when Jesus gave sight to the blind, he gave them spiritual sight as well. That is what we need today. We put our lives in the hands of the divine healer, the Vindicator who will stand forth upon the dust. We pray that through the faith we share especially in our times of loss, we may give others the gift of sight.

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