

My second cousin's second husband died in Texas this week at the age of 59 from a massive aorta dissection, a severe kind of aneurysm. The doctors told my cousin that even if they had known a week in advance that her husband had this condition, there was nothing they could have done to save him. We like to think that modern medicine can cure anything, and we forget that some attempts to stop the approach of death are just futile. People who are diagnosed with a serious disease have to decide whether to fight it or accept it. In fact with every severe condition in life some matters which look hopeless are not, but others really are. How we accept them will make us feel happy or discouraged.

Christianity is an optimistic religion. When things go bad, the Christian faith proclaims there's a better day. Nothing can go so wrong that it cannot be overcome. Christians believe we've even figured out death. So nothing can harm us. Life can do its worst to us and we believe a better life is still to come. To the faithful Christian, nothing is futile.

Today's second reading announces to the newly baptized, "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors." It implies that before the coming of Christ, people lived in futility. They had no promise of redemption, and the end of life was the end of life. But Christ changed all that. The faithful are now ransomed from that bleak belief. Neither silver nor gold bought their freedom; the blood of Jesus Christ bought their freedom, a blood even more precious than fine metals. We have been rescued from death by the author of life.

This optimism will support us in all the circumstances where it's hard to know whether we really have a future or whether we should just accept the sadness of the present. Will this marriage work? Is this job worth it? Will my health deteriorate? Christianity urges people to face those tragedies with optimism, to live in hope that even small actions will erase the feeling of futility. Will the little bag of groceries I bring to church really feed the hungry? Will the support of St. Regis to Ita Maura bring that poor community to its feet? Will my envelope pay the parish debt? Will participating in the Church Community Organization really benefit my neighborhood? Will my baptism really change my outlook at home, at work, and at church? Christianity answers yes. The light of Christ shines through the baptized. The Christ who rescued us from darkness will use us even where the odds for a bright future seem dim, to bring light to the world.