

## Andrei Raphaël Djeebet

Life is a precious gift. Each day we greet the rising sun with hope for the future, thanks for the past and joy in the present. Couples embrace to celebrate their love and share it with children. When a parents accept the gift of a new child, they also receive the hope, thanks and love that come with each new day.

Death is never welcome, even when it takes away the elderly whose end is sure. But when death takes away a child, especially a child at peace in the womb, sadness intensifies. It's not fair to lose a child before the child has the chance to experience hope, thanks and love.

Ghislaine and Redouan, you have opened your hearts in love to each other. Through your family you have already proven that your love is so big that two people cannot contain it alone. Now in faith and trust you opened your home again to the priceless gift of life. The creation of Andrei Raphaël Djeebet is testimony to your deep love, the care you were prepared to offer for his complete development, and your desire for him to enjoy every day.

Children are not supposed to go before their parents do. Their death naturally raises questions. What would this child have become? Why was this child's life so short? Will I see my child again?

The first Christians had similar questions, not just over children, but over their adult friends. They expected the Second Coming of Christ imminently. But he seemed late, and now some of those who believed had died. People began to wonder, "Will I see my friends again? Or have we missed that opportunity because they died too early—they died before the Coming of Christ?"

Saint Paul addressed these concerns with great love and hope. In his First Letter to the Thessalonians he referred to the dead as those who had "fallen sleep." He wrote, "We do not want you to be unaware... about [them], so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have [already] fallen asleep." As to the Second Coming of Christ, Paul made no distinction between those who had died and those who were still alive. He continued, "we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.... We... will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, console one another with these words."

We cannot bring the dead back to life, but we can bring to the living the consolation of eternal life. Those who have fallen asleep are not separated from those who remain. Our ties remain ever strong.

Andrei entered this world surrounded by love. He leaves this world surrounded by faith. May he live eternally, and may God grant us the grace to persevere in our faith until we may live with him forever.

Sunday, October 16, 2022