

Dear sisters and brothers of St. Landry Church

May 13, 2020

You never know when or where you might read something or see something that inspires you. It can reappear in your prayers and reflections at various times, weaving itself into your present. About five or six years ago I was a celebrant at a funeral in Cankton. The burial was to take place at Bellevue Cemetery here in Opelousas. Of course, I arrived at the cemetery before everyone else and started walking through the cemetery as I waited for the others.

Reading the markers and prayerfully acknowledging those who were at rest, I came across one in particular that had a beautiful passage from a well-known poet. It stirred something in me, and I would return to it over the years. In fact, years later when my siblings and I decided to build a family columbarium, I wanted those words to be a part of our place of rest. They are on a brass plaque attached to the columbarium.

Last week I had the opportunity to discover that marker in Bellevue Cemetery once again and identify the person they were for. My apologies to friends or family members of the deceased from whom I stole the words from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The marker is for Barbara B. Spangler, born to this world on March 4, 1946 and borne to His world on July 12, 1987. Here is the quote:

...out of the shadows of night the world rolls into light; it is daybreak everywhere.

The transition from shadow to daybreak, a rolling of the world into light, the dance and texture of authentic resurrection. This grace movement from darkness to light is what we experience throughout our whole lifetime. When the world rolls it does so in the hand of God. He caresses that which He breathed into life and draws it ever closer to the brightness of Himself. There is no leaving in the shadow, it is all journey to the light. It is walking on water to attend to a storm-tossed boat of frightened fishers of men. It is the raising to life of a friend whose sisters have difficulty understanding why the master was not present when He should have been. It is the raising of an only son of a widow or the daughter of a non-follower. It is the gift of sight to the blind-born or the demand to take up pallets and walk. It is carrying the cross, entering the shadow of death so that the sons and daughters of the Creator can live.

The shadow-light grace moments that we experience are no different from the ones faced by those who walked with Jesus of Nazareth. The resurrection of the Divine Master infuses us with that impenetrable light that brings daybreak everywhere. The daybreak scatters the darkness and we find ourselves standing before the author of life, the source of all light. What a good and gracious God.

To all who helped in any way for the celebration of the mass at the Opelousas Catholic baseball field on Mother's Day, you have my thanks and appreciation. It was a wondrous day. It was a celebration of Eucharist for a weary people. Thank you to those who participated here and at home. Together as a sacred, blessed people we move ever closer to the break of day that is everywhere.

Yours in Him,

Russell J. Harrington