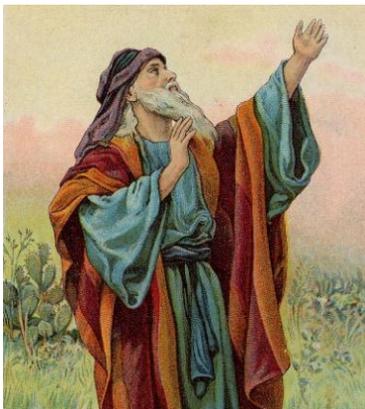


Just Behind the Veil...

*Isaiah 25:6-10a***
Psalms 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20
Matthew 22:1-14

At the conclusion of the novel *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (the fifth of the series) Harry is mourning the death of Sirius Black, His godfather and close friend. The manner of death was being blown through a mysterious stone arch, a thin veil covering the entrance, behind which could be heard faint, whispering voices. Seeking to comfort Harry in his loss his fellow student, Luna Lovegood, assures him that Sirius is not far, reminding Harry: "You heard them, just behind the veil, didn't you...They were just lurking out of sight, that's all. You heard them."



"Apocalypse of Isaiah" (Chapters 24-27). In it, the prophet declares a victory banquet on Mount Zion, a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem. In addition to providing "juicy rich food and pure, choice wines" the prophet declares that God will "destroy death forever", describing death as the "veil that veils all peoples, the web that is woven over all the nations" (Is 25:7-8).

One of the most popular readings for funeral Masses is taken from a portion of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah known as the

Given that Death, as understood in the Old Testament, was considered the ultimate alienation from God, a direct result of Sin, the triumph of the messianic era prophesied by Isaiah can be seen as the ultimate triumph. The fact that Isaiah, a prophet of the pre-messianic era, describes Death as he does is even more remarkable. As fearsome as it was - a true absence of life prior to Christ's victory over it - Death is, nonetheless described, not as a great wall, or a window, or even a door. Rather Death is described as a "veil"; a thin boundary that separates the living and the dead.

With the Crucifixion of Jesus, God has now entered into the experience of

The Apocalypse of Isaiah

Death itself. What was once regarded as the ultimate alienation from God is now saturated with God's presence. What was once the ultimate punishment for Sin is now the inevitable path taken, not to the realm of the Dead, but to the Kingdom of Eternal Life. As His Death on the Cross was the pre-requisite to the glory of the Resurrection, so too our path to rising with Christ is in joining Christ in Death - sacramentally anticipated in Baptism, sacramentally prepared for in the Anointing of the Sick (particularly Extreme Unction and the final Apostolic Blessing) - before ultimately following Christ, in God's good time and according to His will, not over a wall, not through a door, but through a veil.

As Church we proceed with this faith as we pray for those who are dying, and especially when we remember the Faithful Departed. While the death of a loved one is

Death is described as a "veil"; a thin boundary that separates the living and the dead.

always a time of great sadness, our faith is a reminder that all that separates us from those who have passed on is the "veil" of Death. Their passing from this world does not separate them from the larger community of

God's Holy People. They are still a part of our families, and a part of the community of faith that is the Church. We do not lose hope for those who have died, but rather pray for them, as we would pray for each other.

We know that, in virtue of the Victory of Christ over Death, prophesied by Isaiah, those who die are not alienated from God, nor are they very far from us. They are lurking just out of sight. That's all. They are "just behind the veil."

Fr. William Nicholas
Catholic San Francisco
October 12, 2017