

Memorial for Raymond Schulze
3 April 2011, Immanuel Lutheran, New York, NY

The last time I was in a pulpit in NYC Raymond Schulze was seated in the congregation. It was for the wake service for Richard Neuhaus in January 2009. As soon as he heard word of Richard's death, he had said to Margaret, "we're going." Although he was already gravely impaired by his illness, he had wanted to be there.

At a coffee shop afterwards he couldn't quite remember why I was there, but that glitch in his short-term memory had obliterated neither his deeper memory nor the significance of the event that brought him back to New York for the funeral. "The past is never dead," commented William Faulkner, "it is not even past." We gather here to mourn and remember Ray and to mourn, remember and rejoice in the blessings of time. Ray's life, now past as humans reckon such things, is still very much part of our present and our future.

That is surely true for me. He was a mentor, and that history is entirely part of my present. I learned much about Lutheranism, church life, and the possibilities of the ministry from him. Intrigued by law and politics, I had ruled out the ministry before I came to Yale, but my contacts with Ray and Dick Olson, the Lutheran chaplain at Yale, re-awakened the possibility in my mind. He was, therefore, largely responsible for my vocation. Both of them.

But the past, while never past, does embrace a lot of time. So this event is a kind of elegy for me, as I suspect it is for many of you. I was 18 years old when I met the Schulzes – at least those of you who were born by 1963; I now carry a Medicare card.

Through and because of Ray I came to know Jaroslav Pelikan, Richard Neuhaus, Robert Wilken, David Lotz – and Doc Caemmerer – and so many of the leaders of the moderate wing of the LC-MS, a wide variety of fascinating Yale graduate students who hung out around Zion in New Haven, and the occasional member of the Black Panther Party.

I found myself positioned in the midst of the intellectual ferment and church renewal of the sixties. I was introduced to the civil rights movement and urban ministry, and I now serve two small Catholic parishes in downtown Wilmington, Delaware. One of them is a particular success story from that era. For at St. Mary's of the Immaculate Conception February began with a soul food luncheon and March with an Irish tea. Zion in New Haven would not have featured the Irish tea, but that past echoes in my present.

For this range of experiences and opportunities I am indebted to Ray and Margaret, their family and friends.

The past is never past because it is prelude to the joys and losses of the present. We are knit up in one another's stories and in the time that has passed. Its irrevocable quality and time's inevitable losses do not reduce the value of experience or the beauty of memory. The good and the bad remain with us in the eternal present of God.

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!

So wrote Wordsworth in "The Prelude" in 1805 looking back with early Romantic eyes at the French Revolution. By that time, though, his reflections were already wistful.

I cannot say that I know enough of Wordsworth to comment in depth, but I remember well a sophomore seminar at Yale. We studied "The Prelude," and I distinctly recall Wordsworth's sense of disappointment after crossing the Alps. They were grand but when he got through them to Italy, he realized that the transcendent experience for which he had hoped was less than the sum of its parts.

He had come to reckon with disappointment as he aged. The French Revolution had not panned out entirely well, after all. The utopian enthusiasm of its beginnings gave way to the Terror and then to Napoleon. Likewise, the revolutions that swept over us in those days of the sixties and seventies and lent so much excitement to our youth did not pan entirely well. I hope, though, that we did not become jaded or cynical but like Wordsworth genuinely wiser.

And we were young. The mentors of whom I spoke were in their thirties and forties. I was just a decade younger. I now find myself speaking of "younger theologians" when referring to people older than we were then.

Consequently, I have turned to the Book of Lamentations for our first reading. It sits well in the context of a little elegiac brooding, and, after all, Ray was known to brood . . . on occasion.

Lamentations can also teach us to brood and mourn properly – for in spite of its title this poem of exquisitely beautiful pain spins out its woes in a way that never abandons faith and hope. That too I think is true to Ray's spirit and his biography.

From the darkest era of Israel's history, surveying the wreckage of Jerusalem wrought by the Babylonians, the poet pours out his misery.

*My soul is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is;
I tell myself my future is lost, all that I hoped for from the LORD.
The thought of my homeless poverty is wormwood and gall;
Remembering it over and over leaves my soul downcast within me.*

Isn't that worthy of Ray?

But the poet does not stop there; he bursts into a song of redemption and resurrection as he does over and over again, all the while sitting in the ashes and rubble of Jerusalem.

*But I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope:
The favors of the LORD are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent;
They are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness.
My portion is the LORD, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him.
Good is the LORD to one who waits for him, to the soul that seeks him.*

This church was, let us remember, in rubble when Pastor Schulze arrived, and I had the pleasure of working with him and the people of Immanuel on the glorious reconstruction that you still enjoy. Ann Siemer often spoke of figuring that Immanuel was done when the ceiling swung down, but you are still here. The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, even when we are. That's what the biblical poet knew, and Ray was a poet.

The faithfulness of God is not always easily seen, and it is often buried deeply in history, unclear in our lives, intangible in the rubble, but Christians know that it is precisely in weakness and loss that we come to life. The mystery of the cross is inescapable, and that is a good thing. Only through the mystery of the cross do we move with Jesus toward resurrection. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas, a Yale-trained theologian whose path probably crossed Ray's at some point, entitled one of his books, "With the Grain of the Universe."

So it is with life and death in Christ. Suffering and death simply are. But they do not exhaust our hope. We cannot get to life and hope by going against the grain of the universe. But the way Christ went, the way of death to resurrection is the grain of the universe. Not such a bad offer that; and so St. Paul can say to us this afternoon of the body: *it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory.*

There is no honor in Alzheimer's. Death with dignity is a slogan that makes no sense in the face of reality. Death is, as Richard Neuhaus always insisted, the final

indignity. We cannot salvage some tattered shred of self-respect or autonomy from death, but we can know that we die with Christ. He too was sown in dishonor. That dishonor is captured perfectly in the beauty of the great passion chorale, *Oh Sacred, Head Now Wounded* – in German *O Haupt Voll Blut und Wunden*. The German words come down like a hammer, at least to English-speaking ears, and here at Immanuel a few German words seem in order, although it seems I was not the first with that idea. That hymn wonderfully links the piety of early Lutheranism and medieval Catholicism, since the text by Paul Gerhardt was based on a Latin poem long attributed, even if mistakenly, to St. Bernard of Clairvaux. The ugliness of Jesus' death is a consolation for us on this occasion. And that is what the hymn captures. The ugliness of Jesus' death has become for the poets, musicians, architects and artists of the Western world the central subject of the beauty they have created. Just look around you in this beautiful Church. The dishonor of Christ's death is redeemed by God for transcendent beauty. If much of post-Christian art is lacking in beauty, it may have a lot to do with the loss of any appropriate subject.

In Christ preeminently the past is not dead, nor even past. His death is the reality in which we live at this and every moment. He is sown in dishonor; he is raised glory.

And so at length we come to the reading from John's Gospel. Lazarus has been sown in the earth for four days, and Martha comes to Jesus not knowing quite what to ask for: "Lord if you had been here my brother would not have died." She longs to displace the grief just past. If only time would cooperate.

And Jesus insists that it will. It is not a matter of whether he might have been there at the right time. It is a matter of who he is, and so he replies with one of the "I am" statements scattered through the Gospel of John: "I am the resurrection and the life." The immediate past, the death of Lazarus, and the near future, Jesus' own death and resurrection, are connected in the eternal present of God. Lazarus' past is not past. Christ's future is a present reality: "I *am* the resurrection and the life."

What he says to Martha, he says to Margaret, to the family, and to us all. The past is not lost; it is redeemed. The future is not out of reach; we have already been buried with Christ by baptism into his death. Resurrection and life embrace us in the midst of death. Hope dawns precisely because we are in the rubble. Where else shall we hope? What is sown in dishonor is buried with Christ, to rise in glory.

Our little lives and our brief time are windows into the infinite beauty and goodness of God, who loves, values, and cherishes us more than we can imagine. But we can begin to see how much in the beauty of Gospel and liturgy, of love and family, in words and in music.

Leonard R. Klein
2 April 2011

1 Corinthians 15:42-49
Lamentations 3:17-26
John 11:17-27