

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

That strange echo—the unnatural bounce of a single voice off vacant walls: this first caught my attention. Once filled with rugs, pictures, stuffed chairs, and the usual detritus of life, now nothing remained to catch the sound of a door closed or a quiet cough. So the echo. The unnatural echo.

It is, perhaps, the last my eyes will see of those vacant walls. Now covered in fresh grey paint, our moods cast onto them, the walls no longer recalled the stories of those who now walked among them. They merely echoed them back. We stood: the woman who, with her sainted husband, witnessed those walls hammered into place and her children whose life stories those walls once recorded and retold. We now looked at walls that retold nothing.

Then, unceremoniously, we left. No benediction marked our crossing the threshold, as one had five decades past. We simply left. The door closed. The lock clicked. The last of many a steel carriage—the stained and dimpled driveway told tale of past conveyances—carried us away. Down the street. Around the corner. Stop at the sign. We coursed into the artery of traffic. My childhood home, my neighborhood, the place of first kisses, eternal friendships, childhood fights, windows broken by the errant foul balls, family gatherings, neighborhood parties, became a thing of the past.

I suppose I've known for some time that this day would come. I suppose. Like you, I suppose I chose not to dwell on such a heavy grey thought. Still, the day came. Other such days will come. Days more personal and painful than a goodbye to a childhood home will indeed come—the surrender of a spouse looming closest. I suppose, like you, I often choose not to dwell on them because of their inevitability. Indeed, inevitable they are, for such is the Curse. This past February, when our peers celebrated the carnal, I repeated—I echoed—over you that Curse, “You are dust, unto dust you shall return.” This is the Curse. The things of this life must end. So they do. So the dark grey mood of that day.

The Curse is always looming. It's always watching from the corner and from the shadow. It's the unwelcome guest at every gathering in every home. Sometimes, it's arrival is anticipated if not acknowledged. On other sad occasions it breaks in with ugly surprise. The noose is placed on our necks in the womb, and it will inevitably cinch. Some fall only inches, others fall many feet. Yet none escape the grip of that ancient rope.

As we moved along the roadway, no tears fell. We are, after all, people of Hope. And the Hope is great. This Hope also begins in an empty space. It was also a space where voices echoed. It was a place where voices echoed off cold stone walls. Heard in the echoes were not the voices of the cursed, but the voices of those blessed messengers. The ancient stone echoed the glorious news of the heralds: “He is not here! He is risen!” The news came. The Curse is broken. The noose is cut.

The echoes of this world fade. The echoes of the world to come are eternal as He is eternal. This is our hope. It is the hope of God's Easter people. It is our hope.

Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

A blessed Eastertide to you.

Rev. Leonard A. Astrowski Jr., Pastor