

PRAY Loving God, the greening and blossoming Earth reminds us life is your gift and Jesus' resurrection your promise of new life forever. We thank you. Amen.

SPiRIT

What worries you?

Rate your worries by filling in stars. The more stars the greater the worry.



Having the right clothes



Climate change



Getting enough to eat



Food contamination



Terrorist attacks in the U.S.



Paying for college



War



Making a team



Gossip about you



Getting into an honor society



Having a place to sleep



Nuclear waste



Alien invasion



Getting/keeping a girlfriend/boyfriend

As long as I can remember I wanted to be as tall, as strong, and as smart as my brother Jason, who is four years older than me. I especially wanted to beat him at basketball. Finally I did—on our driveway when I turned 16.

Jason plowed into me. “Driveway rules!” he grinned.

I elbowed back and stole the ball.

“You turkey!” Jason said, rubbing his ribs.

“First to 50?” I challenged.

“You don’t stand a chance, little brother.” Jason hooked one behind me.

But when the game was over, I was just as tall as Jason and just as good.

“Good game, Danny boy. You wasted me fair and square.”

Sweat dripped down my face and into my mouth. Victory tasted delicious! But the flavor changed as our games became

uneven, and cancer took away Jason’s chance to beat me.

The games on the driveway stopped, and Jason went into the hospital for tests and treatments. The process weakened him so much that by my senior year, he couldn’t elbow me for a single basket. He was fighting for his life.

Jason greeted me from the couch when I got home from school one day.

“What’s up, Danny boy?”

“Nothing much.”

He always wore his White Sox baseball cap. Mom didn’t make him take it off in the house because it covered his balding head.

“I’ve got the life. All day long I sit around and read the sports page.”

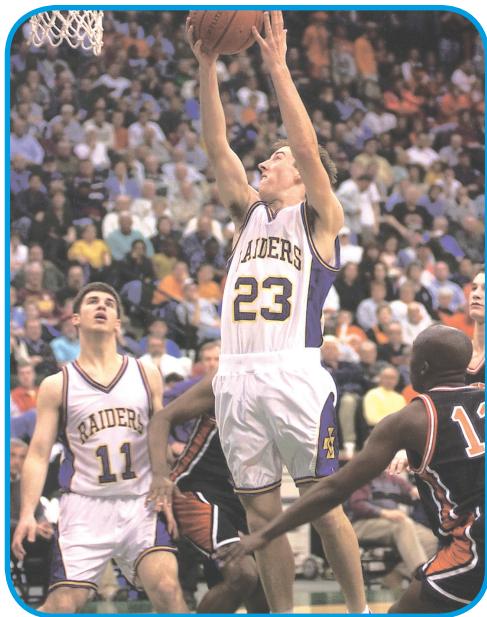
I tried to laugh, but my eyes went to my shoes. I couldn’t look Jason in the face anymore.

“Have you heard from State?” he asked.



Big Brother

by Margaret McCarthy



I wanted to say thank you for everything he had done for me. That's when I got an idea....

"Read the headlines, Danny. You have grown up. Even the boys on the sports desk say so."

Jason put the newspaper on my lap. A black and white photo showed my rebound frozen in mid-air. But all I could see was my brother sitting on the couch, wasting away beneath his White Sox cap.

"I want you to make it, Danny. I know you can, so don't blow it."

Jason grabbed my hat, stood up, and ran into the kitchen. I leaped over the end of the couch, chased after him, and caught him easily beside the refrigerator. We laughed. For a moment the good old days returned. I knew he wished as much as I did that life could be as it was before.

But Jason didn't return to college for second semester. He stayed home, put in more time at the hospital, and followed my season. He was my biggest fan.

We won the league championship and moved into the state playoffs. I wanted Jason to come to my final game, but he had just gotten out of the hospital after another dose of chemotherapy. He felt wiped out and sick. Most of all, I knew, he was embarrassed. He'd lost a lot of weight. He didn't feel like facing crowds looking so pale, skinny, and bald.

"Danny, I want to come, but I look more like your grandfather than your brother."

"Jase, you look fine," I reassured him, but I knew how sensitive he had become. I'd gotten used to his changed appearance, but he hadn't. "The finals are at State. It's only an hour away. Wear my hat and you'll look like one of the fans." I straightened my team cap on his

head. He'd worn it ever since we had won the league title.

When I left the house, I didn't know if Jason would show up or not. I had to leave early on the team bus. I wanted to make Jason feel better and show him how much I cared. I wanted to say thank you for everything he had done for me. That's when I got an idea and stopped at the barbershop on the way to the bus.

"Danny, I didn't expect to see you today!" Frank said as he brushed off his barber's chair. "This kid's All-League," he told his customers. "Playing for the state title tonight."

I slid into the chair.

"You want to look just right for the game?"

"I sure do, Frank."

Fans packed the stands as our team warmed up. I kept watching the bleachers for my folks but couldn't find them. We stood waiting for the announcer to present the team when suddenly I spotted my family finding their seats—three of them, Mom, Dad, and Jason. He was wearing my team cap.

I waved and fought back the lump that rose in my throat.

Jason saw me and lifted out of his seat. His eyes opened wide with surprise. He couldn't believe what he saw. I was as bald as he was!

I rubbed my shaved head and smiled up at him.

Jason began to laugh, shaking his head. Then he took off his own cap and waved it high in the air. He rubbed his smooth shiny head and flashed me a thumbs-up sign.

We won the state title. I accomplished something Jason never had. But that isn't as important as my new goal. I want to be as courageous as he is.

"No, but it doesn't matter."

"Doesn't matter? Since when do State and basketball not matter?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Don't play dumb, Danny. You're good, probably All-League. I couldn't take you if my life depended on it."

Our eyes locked.

"The newspapers are all hype, Jase. Just headlines. You're the one who taught me all the right moves out on the driveway."

"You don't owe me or the driveway. You've worked hard, Danny, and your work is paying off. Did the scout from State show up last night?"

"I didn't notice."

"You didn't notice. What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing's wrong. I'm just sick of basketball, that's all."

Jason grabbed my wrist and stared at me from deep, hollow sockets.

"Look, Danny, don't let my problems wipe you out. We're two different people, you know."

I tried to twist my hand free, but his grip held.

"You've got a great chance for State. So smile pretty at the scouts, okay?"

"Why should I? I could learn more playing against you on the driveway. I'd save Mom and Dad a ton of money, too. Basketball is a kid's dream. It's time for me to grow up."

SUNDAY GOSPEL

5th Sunday of Lent

Jesus is the resurrection and the life.



NARRATOR: There was a man named Lazarus, who was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. The sisters sent word to Jesus to inform him, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

JESUS: This sickness will not end in death; rather it is for God's glory, that through it the Son of God may be glorified.

NARRATOR: Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus very much. Yet, after hearing that Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed on where he was for two days more. Finally he said to his disciples:

JESUS: Let us go back to Judea.

NARRATOR: When Jesus arrived in Bethany, he found Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. The village was not far from Jerusalem, just under two miles, and many Jewish people had come out to console Martha and Mary over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary sat at home.

MARTHA: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would never have died. Even now I am sure that God will give you whatever you ask.

JESUS: Your brother will rise again.

MARTHA: I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

JESUS: I am the resurrection and the life: whoever believes in me, though

they die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

MARTHA: Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God; he who is to come into the world.

NARRATOR: When she had said this, Martha went back and called her sister Mary.

MARTHA: The Teacher is here, asking for you.

NARRATOR: As soon as Mary heard this, she got up and started out in his direction. Actually Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still at the spot where Martha had met him. The Jews who were in the house with Mary consoling her saw her get up quickly and go out, so they followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to weep. When Mary came to the place where Jesus was, she saw him and fell at his feet.

MARY: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would never have died.

NARRATOR: When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had accompanied her also weeping, he was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions.

JESUS: Where have you lain him?

ALL: Lord, come and see.

NARRATOR: Jesus began to weep, which caused the Jews to remark:

MOURNERS 1: See how much he loved Lazarus.

MOURNERS 2: He opened the eyes of the blind man. Why could he not have done something to stop this man from dying?

NARRATOR: Troubled in spirit, Jesus approached the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across it.

JESUS: Take away the stone.

MARTHA: Lord, it has been four days now; surely there will be a stench.

JESUS: Did I not assure you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God displayed?

NARRATOR: They took away the stone, and Jesus looked upward.

JESUS: Father, I thank you for having heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd, that they may believe that you sent me. Lazarus, come out.

NARRATOR: The dead man came out, bound hand and foot with linen strips, and his face wrapped in a cloth.

JESUS: Untie him and let him go free.

NARRATOR: Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and saw what Jesus did put their faith in him.

John 11.1-7,17-45

QUESTIONS 1 How does Jason's cancer change him? What changes for Danny?
2 How does each brother help the other face his life? 3 What shows that Danny and Jason are both brothers and friends? 4 What shows Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and Jesus are friends? 5 What importance do you see in Martha's confession of faith in Jesus? 6 What is life-giving about faith in and friendship with Jesus?

What is death?

By Mary Racine

Perhaps when your grandpa or great grandma died, you wondered what happened to them. Does she still hurt? What can he feel? Is she still with us as a spirit or a ghost? Does he have a body? Is it his old one?

If you've ever pondered questions like these, you are not alone. Death is a mystery. In Sunday's gospel Martha and Mary stand at the grave of their dead brother, wondering why Jesus didn't save him from death. We Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead and that when we die, we, too, shall rise.

When Jesus returns to God after his death and resurrection, his disciples testify throughout the Mediterranean area that they have seen risen and alive the same Jesus who died on the cross. Paul describes their testimony to the Corinthians:

For Christians the day of death inaugurates, at the end of our sacramental life, the fulfillment of our new birth begun at baptism.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1681, 1682



I handed on to you what I in turn received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 people at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. And last of all, he appeared to me.

1 Corinthians 15.3-8

The gospel writers, Luke and John, want to put to rest people's fears that the risen Jesus was just a ghost or a vision, or even just an idea, by stressing the physical body.

In Luke's gospel Jesus eats with his disciples. In John's gospel Thomas touches Jesus' wounds and his disciples eat with Jesus.

However, Jesus can appear and disappear in his risen body. In John 20, Jesus appears in the midst of his disciples even though they have locked the doors. The disciples going home to Emmaus in Luke 24 don't recognize Jesus traveling with them until he blesses and breaks bread with them. So what did Jesus look like?

Paul compares rising from the dead to planting a seed. One can't tell from the seed what the plant itself will look like, yet the plant grows from the seed and shares the same essence. A tomato seed grows into a tomato plant. Paul says our bodies are the seed. When we die, we go into the ground as a mortal body. When we are resurrected, it will be as an immortal, imperishable body.

So not to worry, we too shall live! In Jesus' resurrection his followers find the promise of their own eternal lives. They proclaim this good news even when their preaching endangers their lives. They believe that death can no longer hold them prisoner. They understand that the risen Jesus continues his mission of love and justice through them as his earthly body, until he comes again in glory.



As the body of Christ on earth, we have new questions to ponder.

- How do I recognize the Holy Spirit acting in other human beings?
- In whom have I encountered the risen Jesus today?
- Was it in someone I talked to or passed in the halls?
- To whom might I bring the presence of Jesus?

Jesus said that whatever we do to the least of our brethren we do unto him. He has raised us to new life. Death is not going to be the end. Death is a doorway to the great mystery that we enter with hope and faith.

FAITH in ACTION

- 1** Visit your parish or city cemetery as a class or youth group. Read the death dates and special inscriptions on the tombstones. The stones will tell stories of long lives and short, of children who died in infancy, of soldiers killed in battle.
- 2** Make an Easter banner to express what Jesus' death and resurrection promise us.
- 3** Create together a prayer experience of the struggle between life and death you see in the world around you. Pray for those you love who have died.