

May 30, 2021

Dear Family and Friends,

Time for another update. An executive summary first, for those pushed for time, then further comment for those less beset by a bulging email inbox.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- After extensive investigation, much at the cellular and DNA level, the lymphoma specialist who is guiding my therapy tells me I have a very rare syndrome. For any who like to mine internet medical literature, it is called *chronic lymphocytic leukemia with Richter transformation*.
- This condition, as dipping into the medical literature will show you, has a very poor prognosis. Dr. Awan acknowledges this to me. Overall survival is five months post-diagnosis.
- The plan now is a six-day continuous infusion of a fairly toxic chemo-cocktail done in a hospital so as to quickly manage adverse side-effects (among them, death).
- Things are in progress to get started on Tuesday, June 1. Lord willing I can return home June 6 or 7. I will be isolated in a hospital room in Dallas for the duration.

UPS AND DOWNS

In my previous update, I expressed renewed optimism. With the latest news, Barbara and I are looking (statistically) at my departure from this world sometime this year. Maybe I'll make it to my 75th birthday in early March 2022. So?

This is where the truths proclaimed in the Bible, the promises attached to the gospel which we believe, all come to the forefront of our thoughts. I am minded of St. Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:4 - "4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" What's interesting is that when he writes this Paul is in a Roman prison (cf. Phil. 1:7, 13, 17), likely in Rome itself, where he would be executed in the near future. So, with the aid of his mature disciples Paul begins to set things in order in the congregations he has planted, and he rejoices and commands us all to always rejoice.

When I first began using the *Book of Common Prayer* to guide and shape my worship, I found a certain prayer in [The Great Litany](#) a puzzlement.

From lightning, tempest, and earthquake,
from plague, pestilence, and famine,
from all disasters by land and by water,
from battle and murder, and from sudden death:
Good Lord, deliver us.

Asking for deliverance from all these kinds of calamities makes obvious sense, but *sudden* death? Asking to be delivered from death itself is obviously not going to be answered! So, it must be from *sudden* death that we pray to be delivered.

Why ask to be delivered from *sudden* death? Surely, it is so that we may escape finding

ourselves catapulted from this world with all sorts of messiness, disorder, and neglected duties left in the wake of our departure. If - like St. Paul - we are provided a “prelude” to our departure, *this is a blessing*, not a curse. The prelude grants us space and motivation to put in order various things that are beneficial to those from whom we will be separated for a short time.

WHAT IF . . . ?

This raises a question - why fight powerful diseases at all? Why not adopt a completely passive posture toward them? This attitude seems to fit well with many promises our Lord makes to us concerning the future resurrection. This very question was also put to me by my nine-year old daughter Francesca when she was fighting what was a losing battle with a brainstem tumor 25 years earlier.

One of the most pathos-drenched moments of her 16-month battle came at the most bizarre of times - while we were hurtling through freeway construction in the middle of Dallas rush hour traffic as we were traveling to an appointment with her oncologist. Suddenly, Francesca erupted in angry tears and demanded an answer to this very question. “Why are we doing all this?” It was a fair question for her to ask. Though the entire trial made great demands on everyone in our family, the demands on Cheska were the greatest.

I framed my answer in the midst of zipping and zooming drivers who clearly gave no thought to their own safety, much less the rest of the traffic! It went something like this:

First, the God we worship created all life. He sent his Son to suffer death we all deserve so that those who trust in Him can live forever with Him. Though we all die, it is our fallen bodies which perish; in the great Resurrection we receive a new body like the one our Savior now has. Eternal life is God's greatest reward to those who trust his Son.

Second, disease in Scripture is always a token of fallenness, an emblem of sin and corruption. We fight disease and death because they are the utter opposite of what our Heavenly Father is working for among those who trust His Son. Our Lord healed many of their diseases and maladies. Jesus' generosity in this regard was one of the most obvious signs that he came from God in Heaven.

The immediate result of this answer to Cheska's demand? She almost instantly calmed her crying and composed herself. I'm ashamed to report that this surprised me. What I did not reckon then was Francesca's faith - her faith in me, her father, to tell her the truth, and her faith in our Lord.

Twenty-five years later, my encouragement to my daughter is still good advice. I undertake what is, admittedly, a risky effort, likely the last one I'll endure in combating this rare and deadly disease.

UNTIL SOMETIME NEXT WEEK

The hospital in which I'll reside for a week is equipped with all the latest streaming video technology. So, though I'm isolated in the room for the duration, I'll be able to see and converse with Barbara and my daughters. I'm taking my laptop too. If I'm not feeling too foggy-headed, I may send out another update in a few days from the hospital.

We appreciate so much your prayers for us at this time.

Much love in Him,

Fr. Bill Mouser