

6th Sunday in Easter

Cycle A-2026

One of the most beloved movies of our era is “The Titanic.” In captivating fashion, we are drawn into the reality of this epic disaster and into the improbable and touching love story between Rose and Jack. What brings it all together is the mesmerizing sound and lyrics of the theme song by Celine Dion entitled, “My Heart Will Go On.” In a breathtaking manner, it articulates the union of hearts that people can share with one another both in life and death.

That same sentiment is captured in today’s Gospel. Jesus reveals that even though He is physically leaving the world through death, He will always be with us. He will not leave us orphaned. Jesus reveals the Good News that He is not only a heaven’s away but intimately close to us through the indwelling of His Spirit in our hearts. Through His Spirit and the gift of the Sacraments, Jesus is always 100% present to us. It may sound strange, but Jesus is closer to His people now than He was when He walked this earth over 2,000 years ago. Back then, when He was bound by time and space, He was only able to

interact with and minister to those who physically crossed His path. Once He entered into heavenly glory and sent the gift of His Spirit, He was able to be present to all of His people and all of the time. Therefore, he provides each of us with His undivided attention. By faith and openness of spirit, we can personally encounter and be influenced by His living presence with and within us. In His very person, Jesus reveals that God's love is eternal. It is stronger than death. We are forever in, and we are forever on, the heart of Jesus, even while He is fully enjoying heavenly splendor. As Celine Dion sang: "Far across the distance and spaces between us, you have come to show you go on. Our Risen and glorified Savior would use the words of Celine Dion to say back to us: "We'll stay forever this way. You are safe in my heart, and my heart will go on and on." Heaven cannot keep Jesus away from us or separate us from the loving presence of God. Instead, heaven keeps coming to us and filling our hearts and becoming flesh as we seek His face and build and spread the kingdom of God on earth. Now, I would like to turn my focus to our relationships with other people. Once we truly love someone, whether they are family, friends, or people we have served, they are forever in our hearts. We are forever

united with them. They are part of who we are. They are part of what we have become. They are part of our personal and spiritual journey. Even if the bond has been transformed by physical distance, termination of the relationship, or death, for better or worse, they forever live in our hearts. We can never eradicate them from our hearts, but we can develop a new and redeemed perspective on them. Whether it was ultimately a good or bad experience, we can learn and grow from it, if we open our hearts to the Spirit of Christ who makes “all things new.” The fundamental goodness of our hearts being forever united with others can provide us with the courage to take a chance on love and friendship.

Negative and toxic relationships remind us of the need to be prayerfully discerning about “who” we open our hearts too, and “how much” to do so. At the same time, the risk of love is usually worth it, so let’s be discerning yet brave!

Around eight years ago, I composed a prayer for myself. I would like to share it with you: “Jesus, please bless, protect, renew, heal, and save everyone I have known, loved, and served throughout my life, friend or foe, living or deceased, especially those who have asked for and depend upon my prayers. And those who are most in

need of your love and mercy in the present moment.” You can be assured that I will pray for you for the rest of my life, long after I have left Mary Queen of Peace, because you will live forever in my heart. This prayer has gradually provided me with a new and liberating perspective on both my past and present. I realize that every person that I have encountered along the way is a part of my personal and spiritual history. Each of them, in their own unique way, lives forever in my heart. Whether the experience was good or bad, blessed or broken, I believe Jesus has sought to use it for my personal and spiritual well-being. By looking at my life, relationships, and personal experiences as a tapestry woven together, I have been better able to see and celebrate the providential love God has for me. The biblical image that comes to mind is the potter and clay from the Book of Isaiah. As the Divine Potter, Jesus has intimately and wisely molded and shaped me through my entire life’s journey. Nothing has been in vain. Nothing has been without purpose, including those experiences I would prefer to completely abolish from my mind and heart.

Now it is time to take our relationships with other people to the next dimension of reality. As Celine Dion so

prophetically sings: “You’re here, there’s nothing I fear, and I know my heart will go on. We’ll stay forever this way, you are safe in my heart, and my heart will go on and on.” The love we share with the most cherished people in our lives, is also stronger than death.

Whenever they pass from this life, this union of hearts will continue. We have nothing to “fear” because they are “forever safe in our hearts,” and not just through the sacredness of cherished memories. What is even more awesome, is that they are really and truly spiritually united to us and plugged into our lives to the degree and frequency that Jesus allows. Dare I say that like the glorified Jesus, they are more intimately connected to us than while they walked this earth because their hearts are purified, their life wounds are healed, and they can love us fully with the mind and heart of Christ. There may be brief and fleeting moments in which we get a glimpse of this exciting reality, especially if we are vigilant in asking for their prayers, guidance, and protection, or sharing with them our innermost thoughts and feelings. Celine Dion touches on this reality through the following lyrics: “Every night in my dreams I see you, I feel you. That is how I know you go on. Far across the distance and spaces between us, you have come to show

you go on.” As a quick side note, as a priest, it is not uncommon for people to state that their loved ones come to them in their dreams. What if it was not just a dream? In sleep, we go beyond our rational and conscious mind and enter into the unconscious realm where it is possible to connect with the spirit world.

In an interview, Celine confessed that originally, the song “My Heart Will Go On” was just a hit song she sang. After the death of her beloved husband, it became “their song.” Whenever she sings the song for him, she feels his presence. Through a living faith, may we relentlessly believe that even though God and others may be a heaven’s away from us physically, we are spiritually united with them in an intimate bond of love that continually transcends time and space. As Celine Dion sings: “Near, far, wherever you are, I believe that the heart does go on. Once more you open the door, and you’re here in my heart, and my heart will go on and on.”

On this day, we are particularly mindful of Msgr. Earl Provenza and all our deceased mothers. They are spiritually united with us because their “hearts go on and on,” in our hearts and from heaven.

