

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day
March 12, 2005
Keynote Address by:
Charlotte Bruney & Father Patrick VanDurme

"DYING YOU DESTROYED OUR DEATH, RISING YOU RESTORED OUR LIFE"

CHARLOTTE BRUNEY: We'd like to start with just a little reflection, a story.

Once upon a time, twin boys were conceived in the same womb. Seconds, minutes, hours passed as two dormant lives developed. The spark of life glowed until it fanned fire with the formation of the embryos' brains. With their brains, came feeling, and with feeling, perception – a perception of surroundings, of each other, of self.

When they perceived the life of each other and their own life, they knew that life was good, and they laughed and rejoiced: one saying, "Lucky are we to have been conceived, and to have this world," and the other chiming in, "Blessed is the Mother who gave us this life and each other."

Each budded and grew arms and fingers, lean legs and stubby toes. They stretched their lungs, churned and turned in their new-found world. They explored their world, and in it found the life cord, which gave them life from the precious Mother's blood. So they sang, "How great is the love of the Mother that she shares all she has with us!" And they were pleased and satisfied with their lot.

Weeks passed into months, and with the advent of each new month, they noticed a change in each other and began to see change in themselves. "We are changing," said the one. "What can it mean?"

"It means that we are drawing near to birth," said the other.

An unsettling chill crept over the two, and they both feared, for they knew that birth meant leaving their present world behind. Said the one, "Were it up to me, I would live

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 2 of 21

here forever."

"We must be born," said the other. "It has happened to all the others who were here."

For indeed, there was evidence of life there before, as the Mother had borne others.

"But what if there isn't life after birth?" The one began to cry, "Have you ever talked to anyone who's ever been born? Has anyone ever re-entered the womb after birth? NO!"

He fell into despair, and in his despair, he moaned, "If the purpose of conception and all our growth is that it ends in birth, then our life is truly absurd."

Resigned to despair, the one stabbed the darkness with his unseeing eyes, as he clutched his precious life cord to his chest and said, "Maybe there really is no Mother."

"But there is a Mother," protested the other. "Who else gave us nourishment and our world?"

"We get our nourishment, and our world has been here for as long as we can remember. Have you ever seen a Mother? Does she ever talk to you? No. We must have invented a Mother, because it satisfied a need in us. It made us feel secure and happy."

So, while one raved and despaired, the other resigned himself to birth, and placed his trust in the hands of the Mother.

Hours ached into days, and days fell into weeks. And the time came. Both knew that their birth was at hand, and both feared terribly what they did not know.

They cried as they were born into the light, and coughed out fluid and gasped the dry air. And when they were sure they had been born, they opened their eyes, really seeing for the very first time, and found themselves cradled in the warm love of the Mother!

They lay open-mouthed, awestruck before that beauty and truth that they could not have

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 3 of 21

imagined before this moment. And it was very, very good.

FATHER PATRICK VANDURME: Our goal for this morning is to take a little bit of time. We chose the title from our profession of faith: "Dying You Destroy Our Death, Rising You Restore our Life." Our time this morning is a time to step back, to reflect, to pray, to step back from which building gets closed, which one gets sold, how many priests do we have, who gets what. To take just a little bit of time and to step back, time to perhaps mourn death, the death of the dying. We all have losses. We all have death. We should take a step back to say, "Where am I personally? Where is God in this process?" In death, God is with us. In resurrection, and the resurrection of Jesus, we have hope of seeing the joy of salvation one day. It is through the death that we see the resurrection, and everyone moves at a different pace. Some people are quick; some are slow. Some never move. As we pray and work and talk today, our goal is to have us step back and look at things a little bit differently.

CHARLOTTE BRUNEY: "Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life."

During this season, our attention is focused on the Paschal Mystery. We move through Lent, grappling with how the passion of Christ became a success story, and we wonder ourselves if His promises are true. If we die with Christ, will we rise with Him?

This seemed like a powerful metaphor for the planning process, because there seems to be a lot of dying in it. It's important to name the dying, to do the necessary grieving, and not try to push through it too quickly. Remember that Jesus told us: "Blessed are those who mourn."

In my own parish, where I've been the Pastoral Administrator since 1998, there have

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 4 of 21

been lots of little deaths, some not so little. I originally arrived as a temporary administrator when their priest was called to a special assignment at the Tribunal. During that year, through the planning process, it was decided that St. Vincent de Paul Church officially adopt the pastoral administrator/sacramental minister model, and in the following June, I was appointed to the first of a possible three four-year terms. The same priest that they had known for the past four years was to remain in the rectory, serving the parish part-time as its sacramental minister. So, on the surface, it didn't really appear that all that much had changed. But those who were paying attention knew that it had. At least in the short term, the parish would no longer have a priest to call pastor. This was a death.

"At least we have *her*," I heard one of our parishioners say at a post-funeral reception to a visitor who was lamenting the fact that our parish no longer had a priest pastor. This comment was made in my hearing – actually right in front of me. I detected some appreciation of my service in the tone of her voice, but her remark still stung. It reminded me that change is just so hard for all of us.

The next little death was to come when our sacramental minister was appointed pastor of a larger parish clear across the Diocese, and the people would have to get used to a new priest – but in this case, the priest was only to be with us Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. Our daily Mass was at risk. Two or three mornings a week, it became a Scripture and Communion Service. But even more painful than that, there was no longer a priest living in the rectory. I moved in and I'm there full-time for the people, but I am not a priest, no matter how good a leader I am. It's another death, and there's no getting around it.

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 5 of 21

Right now my planning group is fleshing out a plan in which three of our parishes cluster toward the end of becoming one parish under a single pastoral leader and a shared staff. We see the seeds of new life in the plan, as the consolidation will free up some monies so that we can more efficiently and effectively minister to our people. Sharing resources, especially financial resources, will ultimately make us stronger and more vital, but let's admit it: it's pretty darn scary – and even with the promise of "new life" ahead on the horizon, the plan involves some dying.

We'll have to stop thinking of "yours" and "mine," and we'll have to make the compromise of "ours." I remember years ago when my sister, who had been widowed for 18 years, decided to get married again. Both future spouses were up there in age, having already raised their families. They each owned a home. He didn't want to move into her house, and she didn't want to move into his. At the beginning of their marriage, they kept up both homes – one was on a beach, which was nice, and one was in the city, which was nice. But each still felt like a visitor in the other's place. Eventually, they sold both their homes and began fresh in a new community, building the home that both of them desired at that point in their lives and in their relationship.

But they did mourn the closing of their own homes – so much had happened there, so many memories. Even as they were excited about their new life together, they had to acknowledge what they were giving up and leaving behind, even if they were moving on gladly and truly believed that the best was yet to be.

We need to name our losses so that we can better understand what it is that we are feeling in the planning process. We need to name them and mourn them. It's unrealistic to rush the grieving. But grieving is a necessary step associated with any death. If we

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 6 of 21

didn't care so much, it wouldn't hurt. And that's the point. We do care.

And so when a parish has to give up a Mass to accommodate a reduction in the number of priests available to serve the people in the area, it hurts. The community bleeds as people walk away, or drive away to other parishes whose Mass schedule is more convenient. The parish may suffer a loss in income when dropping a Mass.

When parishes have to share a leader who may not even be a priest, and produce a common bulletin, part of the cozy feeling may be lost – the intimacy of a small community – and perhaps even the sense of ownership. "Our pastor" may have to morph into "Our pastoral administrator" (which is a mouthful!) or "our sacramental minister, our priest." It's a loss. Acknowledge it. Name it. Own it.

Take time to grieve.

FATHER PATRICK VANDURME: No one likes death. Our society doesn't enjoy death. As a priest, I've been fascinated by the number of people who are choosing to not do calling hours. "Father, we don't want to do that. We don't want people to be uncomfortable." Well, there's a downside to not having that, to not allowing those things to take place. It's hard to make people want to move to heal. You know, when you're at a funeral, you can't preach "happy, happy resurrection," because their hearts aren't in it, so you have to take the time to be with them. But the time will come. There will come a time where you can preach resurrection.

One theme that you're going to hear from us again and again is talk, listen, and sometimes mourn to be with your people. Not that false kind of Bill Clinton, "I feel your pain," but the real heartfelt stuff of, "I don't understand your pain. I don't know what you're feeling. My church isn't closing. I don't know what you're feeling, but tell me

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 7 of 21

about it, and I'm going to be with you and I'm going to sit with you and listen." It's a loss of place. You know, it's easy for us to say, "Well, just go over there." But you know what? We taught them to love that place.

Parochialism is now a bad word, but it's something that we taught. Some of you who are more mature than I am will know. Remember those days where if you lived on this side of the street, you went to that church, right? And if you lived on the other, you don't go over there. We taught them that. So, it's wrong for us to get mad and to lose our patience when we say, "Oh, it's okay. Just go over there. My heart is in that."

As Charlotte referred to, it's the loss of someone to call their own. This is one of the things they said in Tioga, "We had three priests in six churches. Which priest is ours? Which one is mine? I want to know. Three doesn't count. I want to know who mine is. There's no one in the rectory." There's the loss of control.

One of the things we talked about is to ask you to fight the desire to blame them, to blame the Diocese, to blame that other thing, because let's admit it: the Diocese does not have a master plan. Bill Pickett does not have a folded up piece of paper in his back pocket that has the secret codes of who's going to do what. It's a fantasy, but it's one that we fall back on, "Well, we have to do it. The Diocese has said." There are facts, and this is what's happening and we have to decide what we're going to do. We might say, "This has worked before. This is our suggestion," but to say to the people, "The control is still in your hands. You have control. You have a voice." There's a time to die. Death is part of life. Life kept living becomes miserable. You don't have to go too far into a hospital to see, "Okay. We've done enough." The Church even says as we fight to keep life alive, there comes a point where you say, "Enough. We can let this person go in

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 8 of 21

peace." We need to honor the losses. We need to honor those people that are losing things.

My first weekend in my new assignment, I arrived on Tuesday, and Saturday, the first Mass that I said in Our Lady of the Valley was closing one of our churches. My second Mass, the next morning, was closing the next church. It wasn't until my third Mass before I was saying Mass at a church that was going to stay open for Sunday Eucharist. We had to say it was closing. We had to use that. We preached about it at every single Mass. Not just at the places that were closing, but at the other places too, saying, "Those people are now sitting next to you. Next Sunday, they're going to be sitting in the pew next to you, and they're in pain, because the place that they loved is no longer being used."

Honoring the past. Writing new histories. Writing the histories of those places. To finish the story and to then draw that story into the beginning of a new story. We used a lot of the stuff from the other churches. You know, the Processional Cross from St. Ignatius is used at St. Anne's, and the people see that and they feel the connection. The paten, the statues. We honor those that went before. We use the names of the people that built those churches that we no longer use. We need to let everyone know that they are important. We draw the lines from the past into the present.

We don't like death. It doesn't make us comfortable. But if we can do that with people and help those people, we help them move through the mourning. Give them control, give them a voice, and let them know that they have a voice in what's happening.

CHARLOTTE BRUNEY: Mourning is painful. Sometimes those of us who are hurting want to make sure that the others around us are hurting too; that they're feeling

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 9 of 21

our pain. It's very human, but not very Christian. It's not what we should be about, even in our suffering.

My good friend Deb recently reminded me that Jesus did not come to take away our suffering, or even explain it. He came to fill it with his presence, to help us find the holy in it, and to assure us that death is not the end. It is a gate, a gate through which we must pass. And the fearful part – as for the twins awaiting their birth – is that we really have no idea what's on the other side.

Are the plans that we're making now the right plans? Will they help us move into the future before us? Can we be sure?

FATHER PATRICK VANDURME: We need to find ways to be truly honest, and that's honest with everything. Honest with that we don't have a super plan. Nobody knows what we're doing. The Bishop doesn't. Deb and Karen don't. We don't have this super plan. We need to be honest with people. Pastoral leaders and committees. We need to find ways to be honest and tell people exactly what's going on – the good and the bad.

Clericalism must die. You know, the days of, "Well, I'm the pastor, and we're going to do this, because I know everything and you're just the people. Please give more money." [*Audience laughs.*] That needs to end. We need to say, "It was a lie then, it's a lie now." We need to say, "You know, we're trying our best."

As priests, we need to find ways of saying, "Hey, I'm just a man. You know, they don't teach you this in the seminary. But you know what? We're doing our best." Pastoral administratorism needs to die as well, because it gets traded up. You know, they fill the void, but they take on some of the negatives too. Not Charlotte, of course –

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 10 of 21

everybody else who's not here. Those people who didn't come. Everybody here is okay.

[Audience laughs.]

But we need to think about that, and think about this whole idea of that "I'm right. I know what I'm doing. This is my legacy. I'm going to push this through, because this is my legacy." Or, "I'm not going to do that, because I don't want to do that." We need to push all that aside, and we need to say, "We don't know." We need to find ways to ask our people, "What do you think?" We can say, "This is our committee. We've come up with this idea. This is our plan," but we have to give people a voice and find a way to let the people critique that plan, to say, "Well, this is what I think." Is it easy? No. Is it fun? Absolutely not.

You know that many of you stood in front of a Town Hall meeting with a group of people who are mad. We need to stand there. We need to take that, and we need to use it and walk with them through it. Hiding from it, does nothing. Pretending it doesn't exist, does nothing. Pretending that everything's okay, is a lie. How do we decide? How do we get input? We keep taking things back again and again and again.

They say, "Well, they don't want to listen." Then you stand in front of them and say, "Well, if you don't come, then you don't complain." Be honest. Be open. We have to say to people, "This is our best guess. We're going to tweak. We're going to change. We're going to make mistakes. We're going to abandon things." If we don't have a plan, where is our hope? We have hope in Jesus, the promise that God made to us. Jesus said, "I'm sending the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, and He's going to give you everything you need." All the wisdom that we need is in our parishes. It's here in this room. It's in our Diocese. We have all the gifts necessary for everything. It's a pain in neck, but it's a

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 11 of 21

necessary step of how we can be honest and talk, and are honest with our faults and our failings, but also honest in what we can do.

CHARLOTTE BRUNEY: We must attack head on some of the myths that need to be dispelled. For example, when parishes cluster, does there have to be winners and losers? The myth is that the one in which the priest or the priests are in residence, wins. The one whose building stays open, wins. The one that has the most Masses, wins. That makes an awful lot of us losers, and it also sets us up always to be in competition and tension. Truly, then no one wins.

As leaders, be sensitive to this reality. When a group clusters, and some church buildings close, do not be too quick to drop the names of the communities or villages that have come together to be a new entity. It may be very cumbersome to hold on to the names, but at least in the short run, it helps suppress the feeling of being a loser, because the parish offices are now located in another town. When it's time to let go of all that – and that will take a lot longer than you may think – you'll know it's right. It's the right time. In the meantime, be patient with the process. As the planners, you have had a lot longer to get used to the idea of your plans than your parishioners have. You've already had a chance to do some of the grieving. They need to catch up. Don't rush them.

We carry a lot of responsibility as leaders in this process, in helping our people come to terms with the realities before them. We can frame decisions in such a way that there are not winners and losers, per se. We can empathize with the losses at the same time that we can celebrate the new possibilities.

Let's continue to be honest here. Sometimes the barriers to "new life" are put up by us! Let's ask ourselves: are we working too hard to preserve our own interests, to "save"

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 12 of 21

our own turf, to "protect" our little parish? Or, in the case of priests and pastoral administrators, to maintain our very pleasant assignments? We must ask ourselves if we are negotiating in good faith – or have we brought hidden agendas to the table? Can we work – and work hard – for consensus? Not everyone is going to like every decision or feel that it's the best route to take, but can each live with the outcome? That's what a true consensus is. It's not about winning and losing – it's about working together to find an outcome that all parties can live with, even as they need to mourn what's being lost in the balance.

FATHER PATRICK VANDURME: One of the themes that we talked about is that this year is the year of the Eucharist, and if you haven't had the chance, I would encourage you to read the document that started this, because the document is incredibly interesting for a papal letter, which are normally not that interesting. But it starts the whole structure of the year of the Eucharist is built around the story of the trip to Emmaus, where, you know, we've got - - You know the story. I'm not going to go into long things, but we need to think about that story and put it into context. So, we have Palm Sunday. We have Jesus coming in. Everybody's yelling, "Yea, us. We're great. Jesus is going to come. He's going to show those Romans what to do." The joy, the glory, the power, the promise of Palm Sunday. You get James and John and their Mother, you know, negotiating, "Jesus, when you get in power, you're going to need some boys here." *[Audience laughs.]* "James, John, get over here. Fix your hair. Come on, look nice." *[Audience laughs.]* That's what she's doing, because she's expecting a royal court to be set up, and just a few days later, that's replaced by Good Friday – destruction, blood, torture, fear, panic. And Jesus walks with them, and he reveals

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 13 of 21

himself in the breaking of the bread. And what do they do when they see Jesus? The first thing they do is they get up and they run back to Jerusalem, and they say, "Guess what?" and they say, "I know he was here too. He's alive." And all the promise that was destroyed on Good Friday is brought back. All the promise is back, but in a totally different way that they could have never imagined. The royal court with the people in power – that's not what Jesus came to do. It's a totally different view, and they get to work. They receive the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, and they build the Church, the Acts of the Apostles.

That's one of my favorite images is that that's what we're about here, people. We're building a brand-new church. What was, the way we used to do things – not anymore. We need to take the good from there, we need to take all that stuff and bring it with us. But we're building a brand-new church.

The death and the pain of our decisions, the death that we live through today will give way to new life tomorrow. How do we know? Jesus promised. He never promised what the Church would look like. He never promised us who would be in charge, who would be running the place, but again and again, we see God taking care of the first early church. They're full of mistakes, false starts. Peter and Paul disagreeing, "No, you've got to go this way. No, you have to go this way," and eventually, they figured it out. And that's where we are today.

Today, in our Diocese, we're in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. But we're not starting from scratch – that's the beauty. We're starting with power, with knowledge, with wisdom, and with passion in our people.

CHARLOTTE BRUNEY: The parish that I pastor was established in 1869, one

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 14 of 21

year after the Diocese of Rochester was formed. It is an old farming village, and the core of people who live there have lived there all their lives. When their grandparents and great grandparents built the present church building in 1885, they sacrificed tremendously to construct something beautiful for God, something they could pass on to their children and grandchildren. They were building for the future, a future they could not see but could imagine.

The people who founded our parishes literally took a gamble on the future. This was happening all over the Diocese as the population was growing, as they were proudly encouraging religious vocations among their children, and could see that the churches that they were building needed to be big to accommodate their dreams. They sacrificed and built schools and convents and gymnasiums – places where the Catholic community could gather – these Catholics who were discriminated against in the workplace and in public life. By and large, they were immigrants. Their parish churches became safe havens for them, necessary places for them to gather. And they did gather in church halls every weekend for dances, during the week for Bingo. They gathered as the Rosary Society, the Sodality of Mary, the Sacred Heart Men's League. For their children – who would not be welcomed at the local YMCA – they established CYO teams. In the Catholic Church, they would be treated with great respect, respect that was, frankly, hard to find in other places.

Those days are gone, my friends. Let's admit it. We are mainstream now. We don't need the Church to plan out our social lives. We hop in our cars and drive ten, twenty, thirty miles or more to go to a movie, out to dinner, to a superstore, to visit family. The Church compounds our ancestors built no longer reflect our present realities. And in

many cases, they are no longer sustainable.

Like those who built our churches in the first place, we are in the position now of taking a gamble for the future. At this moment in our history, we are being called to be stewards of the future.

Do not be afraid. The future is unknown, but it is not uncertain. The Holy Spirit is with us in the details. Jesus promised us that "the gates of Hell would not prevail over us." We need to trust in the Lord, and trust in the Resurrection.

FATHER PATRICK VANDURME: That theme of connecting ourselves to those who built our churches in the 1880s and the 1890s is one of my favorites, because we're doing what they did. We have to look around and say, "Okay. What can we do?" They did the work then in the 1880s, the 1890s, at the turn of the century, and we are taking that work to the next step. We're making the decisions today that will build the Church for the next 125 years.

I've said many times, and people kind of shake their head – they're not too sure when they hear their pastor say this – when I say, "I don't really care about 20 years ago. I care about 100 years from now. What are we doing?" I love that, and I want to honor that, but I want to say, "What are we doing to put ourselves in the position so that when you and I are long dead, the community is strong?"

There's hope and signs of resurrection even in our Diocese. In my own parish in Canisteo – if you've ever been to Canisteo, it's that quintessential, kind of what Charlotte was talking about – the church there was the center of everything. There's two lights. They're right next to each other. They blink after 9:00 o'clock. It's a tiny town. And three weeks ago, I went to them and said, "You know what? There's something that we

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 16 of 21

can do with your church. You don't have Sunday Mass there." They use it for their altar Rosary Society – about 45 minutes a week. We spend a lot of money to heat it. I said, "We heat it for the bats and the birds." But we heat it and we take care of it, but I said to them, "This is the situation. Sister Sue – one of the Sisters of Mercy, Steuben County Rural Ministries – they need a new place. They need to move out of their current place, and you know what? The Church is the perfect place. Take out the pews, for racks of food and racks of clothing." And I stood there in front of them and I said, "What do you think? This hasn't been decided. What do you think?" And they asked tough questions and they got in my face, but at the end, they said, "Okay." "We're not happy. We wish the story was different. We wish that we had a priest in our rectory. But given the reality, okay. We can do this." And as I drove away, I got very emotional. As I drove the short distance, I - - I don't want to - - I started to cry as I drove home. And I was crying for two reasons: one because I was praying. I said, "God, I hope I'm right. I think I'm right. Given all these factors, I think this is the best decision. Man, I hope I'm right." Then, I cried for the people, because no matter what, we crossed a bridge that night – that once those pews get taken out, once that altar gets taken out, it will never be a church again. And that's sad, and I was awestruck by the people in that small community who built – literally built – that church, and they said, "Okay. You can do that."

We love happy endings. We're not there yet. But there can be happy endings in our future. Remember the story of the twins that we started with. The fear that they felt. Think of where we are as new birth. Think of new birth. I don't have children. I think you probably would know that *[Audience laughs]*, but think about it. Think about birth.

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"

Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005

Page 17 of 21

I'll tell you a secret. I don't like Nativity scenes, manger scenes. You want to know why? Because they're too pretty, they're too clean. You figure if Mary just gave birth – birth is yelling and screaming and sweating and "ah" and body fluids and blood – it's a dirty, messy thing that comes and brings beautiful things. It's a lie for us to say, "Oh, it's just a sweet thing."

We're on the threshold of new birth. Some see new light at tunnels. I was in Tioga County last year. That was my first assignment, and there's some light at the end of that tunnel. Here in Hornell and Canisteo and Rexville, we're just beginning to see the glimmer, but most of you are still in the dark tunnel, getting pushed and squeezed and moving slowly. We don't have to trust ourselves. We trust God. God will protect us and guide us. He made us a promise.

Today, that's what parents do, and that's what we're doing. We do our best and leave the rest to God, and we trust that God will restore our life, once we make it through this time.

We've offered no concrete, fix-it plan. We haven't given you a toolbox to go out and now you know all the answers. Hopefully, that's going to happen in the classroom sessions. No pressure, but, you know *[Audience laughs]*. I guess our hope here was that we give you a lens, a different kind of lens in which to look at the situation you're in. To look at your situation with a different lens. And, as you go into your different, smaller groups, keep these images in mind, keep these themes in mind and let them affect the way you think and talk and listen for the rest of the day – and maybe together, we can see things in a new way – be resurrected to "new life" in Christ.

Amen. Thank you. *[Audience applauds.]*

"Dying You Destroyed Our Death, Rising You Restored Our Life"
Pastoral Planning Leadership Day - March 12, 2005
Page 18 of 21