

# What's Heaven Like?

When my dad died more than five years ago, my then three year-old-grandson asked me, "Why did GG (great grandpa) Frank have to die?" I explained that sometimes when you get really old and your body gets tired God says, "Do you want to come home?" Sam replied quickly, "When I get really old and my body gets tired and God asks if I want to go home, I'm going to say 'no.'" He then proceeded to ask how one gets to heaven. "Is there a door?" What do you do when you get there?" I told him he'd be with God and be so happy that he wouldn't want anything else. "OK," he replied, "then what's next?"

I think a lot of us are like Sam though we aren't as open about our questions and doubts as he is. Especially at this time of year when Jesus' death and resurrection are at the forefront of our minds, it might be a good time to give ourselves permission to think about this.

I'm guessing that before we were born most of us were comfortable in the womb and had no desire to leave. If we had been able to put words to it we might have wondered if there was life outside the womb and what would it be like. Then suddenly we left the warm security of mom and were thrust into a world where everything was different. Because mom was there we acclimated to it and as we grew couldn't imagine any other place we'd like to be.

What if dying is like that? What if we go from the safety of our known world into a whole new way of being? And when we get there our friend Jesus is there with us. Would dying be less scary if we believed that?

The resurrection stories in the Bible give us some hint of how things might be. John's gospel (chapter 20) suggests life after death involves a deepening relationship with God where the mere mention of her name by the one she

thought to be a gardener quieted Mary Magdalene's grief and gave her a sense of being known and loved as she never was before. And as in life, my guess is that God takes us as we are and gradually reveals more as we are able to receive it like Jesus did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke chapter 24).

For me, the most exciting glimpse of what heaven might be like comes from I John 3:1-2.

"See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are... Beloved we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Wow! What a promise. When my husband was dying he described himself as "coming and going" between this life and the next. He was unafraid and at peace. He knew his friend Jesus was calling him to a new life beyond anything he had ever imagined. The door Sam asked about was opening and his best friend was the door keeper. What a homecoming—what a celebration!

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

