

# Religion

## Remembering a lost friend

By JIM RYAN  
Third Sunday of Easter  
Luke 24:35-48  
April 14, 1991

### FREDERICK BEUCHNER'S DREAM

"Exactly a year ago tomorrow ... a very good friend of mine died. He was an Englishman - a witty, elegant, many-faceted man. One morning in his sixty-eighth year he simply didn't wake up. Which was about as easy a way as he could possibly have done it. But it wasn't easy for the people he left behind because it gave us no chance to say good-bye, either in words, if we turned out to be up to that, or in some unspoken way if we weren't. A couple of months later my wife and I were staying with his widow overnight in Charleston, S.C., when I had a short dream about him, which I want to tell you about.

I dreamed that he was standing there in the dark guest room, where my wife and I were asleep, looking very much the way he always did in the navy blue jersey and white slacks that he often wore, and I told him how much we missed him and how glad I was to see him again, and so on. He acknowledged that somehow. Then I said, "Are you really there, Dudley?" I meant was he there in fact and truth, or was I merely dreaming that he was? His answer was that he was really there. And then I said, "Can you prove it?" "Of course," he said. Then he plucked a strand of blue wool out of his jersey and tossed it to me, and I caught it between my index finger and my thumb, and the feel of it was so



Religion and Reality  
by Jim Ryan

palapable and so real that it woke me up. That's all there was to the dream.

But it was as if he had come on purpose to do what he had done and then left. When I told that dream at breakfast the next morning, I had hardly finished when my wife spoke. She said she had noticed the strand of wool on the carpet when she was getting dressed. She was sure it hadn't been there the night before. I thought I was losing my mind, and I rushed upstairs to see, and there it was - a little tangle of navy blue wool that I have in my wallet as I stand here today."

#### FOUR QUESTIONS

1. How many dreams have you heard like this?  
I've heard two. One from my aunt and one from a friend. My aunt's dream was about her brother who died of kidney failure when he was twenty-four years old. My friend's dream was about a friend and teacher of his who died in middle age.
2. What's your reaction to dreams like this?  
When my aunt first told me the

story of her brother appearing to her in a dream, I laughed. I was an adolescent at the time, but I think I'd still laugh.

When I read Beuchner's dream last week I shrugged and wondered if the strand of blue wool wasn't just a cheap artifice to end a dream with an overly neat twist.

3. But why then use Beuchner's dream in this column?

Because to me of little faith it sounds a lot like today's Gospel reading. In the Gospel, Jesus appears to the disciples, probably back in Galilee, after the high drama of his trial and crucifixion in Jerusalem.

The detail that caught my eye however was the grilled fish. Jesus is offered and eats a piece of grilled fish. Aside from placing the appearance in Galilee, grilled fish is apparently still rare in Jerusalem, this detail has the same feel about it as the strand of blue wool in Beuchner's dream.

The early disciples probably held on to that memory of the grilled fish the way Beuchner holds on to that strand of blue wool.

4. But aside from this connection, so what?

Let me paraphrase Luther. Without faith, neither strands of blue wool nor grilled fish mean anything.

That may be a bit obscure. For Beuchner and for the Gospel writers, faith isn't obtained by dreams or post-resurrection appearances.

Endnote: Beuchner's dream is quoted from *Spiritual Quests*, edited by William Zinsser, Boston: 1988.

# Politics and religion are controversial topics

By PAUL D. STADT  
Pastor of the  
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A discussion is taking place in our nation regarding its future. We are not the only ones talking about it. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are other examples of nations in discussion about their future.

Every human being in the world lives under the jurisdiction of some kind of governing authority. Nobody can escape living under some kind of political structure. Politics and religion are often considered to be such controversial topics that they are off limits in the barbershop or the beauty salon. The future of our nation should be a topic of conversation among us all.

One of the questions that needs

to be considered in discussing the future of Canada is: what is the job of government, what should we expect it to do for us.

Part of our struggle in political discussions is that we indeed ask ourselves too often: what can we expect the government to do for us. Asking what the government can do for us is not a bad ques-

tion, but even before we ask what the government do for me, we have to ask what is the government's God-given task?

When I live in Canada, I am thankful that I have the freedom to state my convictions about what I believe the task of the government is. Not everybody  
(Cont'd. on Page 12)

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