

English translation of the sermon delivered at the Oratoire du Louvre on May 19, 2026, during the memorial service for the family and loved ones of Mr. Jean-Louis Marmier, by Pastor Robert Philipoussi.

“Let us go across to the other shore”- such is the usual translation of this passage chosen by your loved one. It is a poetic and evocative translation, one that fits well with what follows in the text: the crossing of that great lake known as the Sea of Galilee, a vast stretch of water known for its sudden squalls.

But the Greek, the language in which this account was composed, is more -I would say -,dry, prosaic. It should be translated as:“Let us pass beyond”or“to the other side.”It is a spatial and geographical expression, not a spiritual one.

This translation,“to the other shore,”recalls non-biblical mythology, whether Greek or Egyptian. Powerful myths were already ancient in the time of Jesus: stories that filled the collective unconscious and told of the passage into the life to come as a boat led by a divine ferryman, enabling us to cross beyond the terrible waters.

It is because these myths reached the translators that they rendered this passage in that way. From then on, it became a story often read or recalled during funeral services, whereas originally the author of the Gospel probably did not have that intention - I mean the intention of speaking about the passage of death. For the author is speaking about people who are alive: here, in this case, the disciples and Jesus. And because this author is addressing the living: here, in this case, the readers, the hearers of this text, and ourselves gathered here.

It is at this point that we can reflect, in a subtle way, on this“let us pass beyond.”This beyond, in the mindset of these Galileans and of Jesus himself, even if it is invisible, is not in a different dimension from the one in which they find themselves. It is simply, for the time being, beyond the reach of sight. This“other side,”likewise, is not in some immaterial heaven; quite simply, it is elsewhere than the place where we stand.

We must grasp this religious mentality of the Jews of that time. It is a religion that has nothing to do with the way we distinguish between earth and heaven, flesh and spirit, matter and ideas, body and soul. In a certain sense, for them, everything is on the same plane, even if not everything is visible, simply because of our limitations.

Jesus, moreover, in another Gospel, that of Luke, makes this very surprising statement:God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For to him, all are alive.

And the passage described here in this text, if it does indeed evoke the crossing of a dangerous lake in order to go from one place to another, and if we wanted to use this story to speak of the disappearance of a loved one, then we should say that it is the same process. Jean-Louis, like everyone, had throughout his life to cross boundaries, to go beyond, to move toward another side that was not at first visible to him, but where, one day, he was finally able to set his feet.

I would say today that even if this final passage has made him disappear from our sight, for him it is the same journey that continues -provided, of course, that we truly hear this affirmation of Jesus himself, which I intentionally repeat:*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For to him, all are alive.*

According to the Gospel, what the disappearance of someone we love should produce in us is not the observation of their vanishing into the neutrality of an absurd cosmos. It should simply be the awareness of our own limits, we who still dwell on this side. Of course, our sorrow is great. When a loved one disappears, explanations are insufficient. But for our pain, for our sadness, there is an answer: the answer of our solidarity, made possible by the bonds woven by our loved one himself. The answer to our pain, to our sadness, is our unwavering solidarity with one another, we who survive him.

But as far as he is concerned, and according to the Gospel, *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For to him, all are alive.*

Jean-Louis chose for today, in addition to the passage from Mark, this sentence from Paul's letter to the church in Rome, which I read to you again:

Indeed, none of us lives for himself, and none of us dies for himself.

This is undoubtedly a message he addresses to us this morning, this small assembly gathered in the temple of the Oratoire du Louvre, a place that once saw kings of France attend the funerals of people famous in their time.

He invites us to exercise the solidarity of those who remain on this side- I would say, the people of this shore - since, according to this text, to live exclusively for oneself is not merely that it would be "wrong"; it is that it would have no meaning.

He also invites us, perhaps, to think of his death differently. Through the texts he expressly chose, through the music he wanted, through the testimonies he allowed, he invites you to love being living people bound together in solidarity, able to face even this storm of mourning.

May the Lord bless each and every one of you.

AMEN