

We have gathered to celebrate the life of a woman who meant so much to all of you. A woman that I have learned was special to many others. She was definitely special to God. Nancy was truly a blessing to our world and made it a better place for us all. In the gospel reading that was read in church this morning Mark tells of a time when Jesus' mother and brothers showed up to visit him. The disciples tell Jesus his family is here and wondered if didn't want to go out to see them. He told his disciples, *For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.*" I think that Jesus would have said, and Nancy was my sister for she was all about doing the will of our heavenly Father. There is no doubt that her birth family was important to her. But there were her friends she met in college, especially Gwen.

Nancy had a great love for her Lord, and she understood what he meant when he said our chief goal in life was to love the Lord with all our being and to love our neighbors. Like our Lord, she had a great compassion on others – especially those who were struggling in this life.

Her political leanings centered on those in our government who had a heart for the people. She supported those politicians with her time and money who had the best interests of all people, especially the poor and the disenfranchised. She also worked at Interfaith housing making sure that people had a place to live that was affordable and safe. She was active in the Chicago chapter of NOW, championing the role of women in our society that was honored and respected. She often putting not only her money but also her presence in promoting the rights of women.

Her love for people moved her to also realize that our Lord had given us this world to enjoy and put us into community to enjoy the company of others. She served as president of her condo association. In the days Harold Washington was mayor of Chicago she served on his department of special events. I can't imagine a better man to serve with in our community. She supported many of the places in our city designed for people to enjoy life – the Botanical Gardens, Field Museum, Chicago Symphony were among many of the places she supported. And her love of God's creation also moved her to be an advocate of animals – especially cats.

There is no doubt that Nancy was a woman of great compassion and energy supporting so many things that enhanced the lives of others. But she also found time to travel with friends.

Life was good – she enjoyed it – was always there for others. And then the lymphoma hit. Her doctors told her that it was conquerable. And being the fighter for life, she was going to beat this. She started her chemo treatments. She got half-way through them when things took a turn for the worse. The quality of her life grew less and less. She lost her voice but thank heavens for technology – she could text. And text she did. Even when someone came to visit and was sitting next to her, she would text them. She was going to communicate and cultivate her friendships. The loss of voice was not going to stop her. She was a woman with a strong will and determination.

Unfortunately, she grew weaker. Nancy saw that in good times and bad the Lord was there for her. He had supplied all she needed and would do so going forward. He blessed her with so many good things. And so, on Tuesday, May 25 – when the Lord told her that he wanted her to come to his home – she agreed. She fell asleep in his arms and awoke in that new home. She saw her Lord faced to face. She knew she was home – this was good – this was the home that deep down she had longed for a very long time.

Today, we rejoice for her, but I am sure that you feel that she should still be here. After all she has always been here for you. She is a fixture in your life. Her love and her presence filled your life with so much good. There is no doubt about it, this is a hard day. On one hand, you know Nancy has the very things you want her to have, the things you were unable, try as you did to give her healing and a prolonged life. But you and her doctors were unable to give her those things. The only one who could give her the very things you wanted for her was God. In his own way we know that God gave her healing. We know that she is healthy and well. She is with her Lord and the family she missed. We can celebrate all of that for Nancy – and yet at the same time because you were loved by her, and you loved her and so this is a difficult day. There is a huge hole in your hearts and nothing and no one else will ever fill it. You will miss Nancy as long as you live.

God fully understands that. As Christians we put our hope in God's great love for us. We know that our God is not far removed from us. In fact, once, he became one of us. He walked on earth as a human and experienced all that we humans experience, both the good and the painful. And so, he fully understands our griefs and sorrows. The good news is that he can do more than simply understand our pain, he is able to do something about it. He reminds you that he is with you in this dark valley – he has been here so many other times – he knows the way and promises to lead you to happier days again. He reminds us that he took on our life so he could die our death, in order that we might share his life. We know that because he lives, we live also.

And our loving God goes even beyond that. Not only does he go with you, but he also surrounds you with family and friends to support you in this time of grief. And while we rejoice that Nancy lives with the Lord, the Lord has given us a special gift – the gift of memory. Nancy also continues to live in your hearts and minds. You have so the memory of the many times she spent with you. And so, locked deep within you are some very precious memories of how she brought you happiness. Those are moments to treasure. But she has also taught all of us some of the most important lessons in life. We carry her legacy on as we continue to the things, she dedicated her life to. She has taught us to value every human being as worthwhile and important part of society. We will stand with her to defend those people this world seeks to put down.

All of that is still yours to treasure and cherish. I know the memories will bring you smiles. But I also know those very memories will bring you tears because they remind you that Nancy is not here to stand with you in those moments. – it also brings tears and that is ok. Hopefully sometime soon you can celebrate all that Nancy brought into

this world with family and friends and that memory will only grow stronger as you resolve to continue the efforts, she found worthwhile.

Please also remember that today is not the end. This is not goodbye. For we will meet again. Today, we understand that we shall be apart of only a brief while. Some day we too will join in the house of the Lord. There all wrongs will have been made right and the good of life will be even better. We will sit at that great meal and rejoice that all has been accomplished and we can celebrate the victory of eternity. But until that day, I pray God be over you to protect you, beneath you to lift you up when you stumble, beside you to guide you, and most of all, within you to fill you with his love and peace. Amen.