

Beth missed Keith. His death was hard on her. But it is hard on us to lose Beth so suddenly. Still, it would have been harder if Beth had died while Keith was still alive. Keith's physical needs were demanding. Beth not only knew what to do when something went wrong with Keith, but she had a peaceful way of handling the situations. Keith knew how serious his health was, but he took it in stride because he had faith in his doctors, and he had faith in Beth. Keith gave us plenty of reasons to be concerned about his health in the months before he died, but we had no clue about Beth. All this makes it hard on us, and yet I find myself begrudgingly happy for them that they are together again - because they made a great team.

Beth and Keith had to deal with a lot of adversity in life - questions about health, disagreements with friends, and even the loss of a child. Yet through all this, or maybe because of all this, their faith remained strong - so strong that they stayed close to the Church. They were both very active in parish life here. In the very moment of her death, Beth was in the midst of an act of charity for one member, while planning to spend the morning with friends from St. Anthony's preparing for St. Joseph's Day. On that day the parish turns its attentions to the needs of the poor, the thanksgiving we owe to God and the saints, and the return of many of our former members to enjoy friendship, tradition, food and faith. Beth had a lot planned last Thursday morning. When you think of all that she did for other people, perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that she died on a day like that. Almost every day of her life was a day like that.

I asked Beth before Christmas what her plans were for the holiday. She told me she still hadn't figured out all the details, but she was comforted that so many people were reaching out to her to make sure she would be OK. She was realistic enough to know that people are ready to help you out the first time through the holidays, but that nobody else feels the continued loss of a lifetime partner year after year, except the spouse who survives. Beth told me, "I'll make it through this Christmas. It's the next one I'm worried about."

Saint Paul told the Corinthians that our body is like a tent put up by human hands, but God has prepared another dwelling for us, not made by hands, eternal in heaven. Paul probably knew he would not live much longer. He said he liked being alive, but he had some sadness about it: while he was "at home in the body," he was "away from the Lord." He said he'd rather leave the body and go home to the Lord, but whether at home or away, he aspired to please God.

Beth could be proud of the plans she had in place for the day she died. I don't know about you, but some days I don't have good plans. Some days I don't act my best. Some days I do not aspire to please God. I'd hate to die on one of those days.

My brothers and sisters, we do not know which day we will be summoned away from this body to meet our judge. That day will go easier if we live each day in the Lord. Perhaps we could start today.