

## Alice Turner

When she was in her 80s, Mom said, “The only reason I’m still around is God hasn’t figured out the answers to all the questions I’m going to ask him.” She also said, “When I get to heaven, if they have cars there, I’m not staying.” Mom didn’t like driving, and she did not do it well. She voluntarily handed over her car keys quite a few years ago, and let me tell you that is why many of you in this church today are still alive.

She loved life, she was proud of her German ancestry and her Minnesota roots, but to borrow St. Paul’s expression, her citizenship was in heaven. She was a tourist here. She went to mass every day. She prayed the rosary at home. In some ways she was the priest of this family. She led us in prayer; she offered sacrifice. She framed this big world inside her bigger faith.

She grew up in the Depression, which explains the simplicity of her life. She never wanted more. “I have enough. Don’t give me clothes for my birthday,” she’d say, “but maybe a nice bottle of wine.” I never remember her showing envy. She was grateful for what she had, was suspicious of those who didn’t share, and whatever didn’t go her way, well, “So be it,” she’d say. She knew that her dementia was increasing, and like a true child of the Depression, she didn’t fight it. She lived with it. She told me, “I’m just praying that God will give me whatever I need to face the days ahead.”

Mom continually pursued her education. Whenever she didn’t know the answer to something, she would go look it up. She enjoyed reading. She made us six kids read for one hour daily. Most people thought she was expanding our education; she later told us she just wanted one hour of peace and quiet every day. All six of us still read.

Mom was a writer. Her extensive correspondence to family and friends grew after she discovered email at the age of 79. She kept us informed about her interests (mainly other members of the family), and her concerns (mainly how to fix broken things after Dad had died).

Mom played some piano and violin. She and Dad bought a piano for their first home in Kansas City, and they made us all take lessons. We grew up with live music in our home every day. She was a sports fan by marriage. She loved Dad so much that she accompanied him in 1947 when he attended a major league baseball game for the very first time. It was at Fenway on their honeymoon.

Mom enjoyed travel and her time at home. She was nimble with her hands. She hung wallpaper, crocheted, sewed, made stocking caps, baked apple pie, folded laundry, quilted, and she could type 100 words a minute. She even made the chasuble I wore for my ordination 36 years ago. I’ve worn it a lot since then, on not-so-special and special occasions - like today. She had good hands. After carpal tunnel surgery, she lost those abilities. “So be it,” she said.

“So be it,” Jesus must have thought when soldiers nailed his carpal tunnel to a cross. His own hands useless, he cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” The Father’s hands had shaped him in infancy, the Father’s hands had guided him through youthful jeopardy, the Father’s hands

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steadied his spirit on Calvary, the Father's hands raised him from the dead. We can do a lot with our hands, and while we're able, we should.

Mom taught us to serve others. When we lived at 57th & Woodland, we volunteered over at 53rd & Highland for the Little Sisters of the Poor. I've heard many people say that they would be happy if only the Little Sisters took care of them at the end of their lives. They are right. But if you want true happiness, don't receive care from a Little Sister, give care as a Little Sister. The ones who are truly happy are not the elderly at 87th & James A Reed, but the sisters at 87th & James A Reed. If you want to be happy, don't receive service. Give service.

The Depression is the lens through which we see a lot of Mom's life, but it does not tell the full story. Mom also believed in racial tolerance. She was a product of the Civil Rights Era. Mom kept friends who belonged to other churches. She was a child of the ecumenical movement. She developed a sense of justice and right. My brothers and sisters inherited that sense and made it a cornerstone of their employment and their families. Some things didn't seem right to Mom, as when a child was born with disabilities, or a young person died a tragic death. All those events fattened the dossier of questions she intended to ask God one day face to face.

One message of Mom's life is to face difficulties head on. When you find something you cannot understand, look it up. When you have choices to make, chose justice. And when you run into mystery, the terrible truths of inequality in the world around you, don't get angry, don't give up, don't lose faith. Put these problems where they belong - into the hands of God. After all, like her, we are all citizens of heaven. We don't belong here. We have another home.