

Dorothy Johnson

Dorothy has come home again. Msgr. Bud Fiedler received her into the Catholic Church in this building. She lived next door in the Cathedral Towers for ten years, and she has returned to this place so that we can all say farewell here.

Dorothy loved her faith and her family. She enjoyed music and the great outdoors. She believed in hard work and in helping those who had less. She loved our country, and she loved life. She touched many people throughout her long years, principally her family, but a great many friends, colleagues and patients as well. Many have come back today to pay their respects.

Throughout her life Dorothy experienced giving and receiving. She gave to her family, and she received help from them in her time of need. Fulfilling a lifelong dream to become a nurse, she gave terrific care to her patients. Then after all that giving, she received care from nurses at her last home. Dorothy suffered dementia for five years, which means her family suffered with her for five years. She gave up the gift of awareness, but coming off medication recently she received the gift of recognizing people again. She gave to this community, and we receive her back.

All that giving and receiving reaches a climax today. God gave her the gift of life, and now God receives her back into the eternal mystery from which she came. Dorothy entered the world as a child of her parents, and she enters the next world as a child of God. In her vocation as a mother, she cared for children with a spirit of sacrifice that sustained her throughout the adversities and joys of life. In her vocation as a nurse, she offered the same spirit so that people who could not care for themselves would receive the care they needed. Many of us who start life as a child will end our life childlike. We come home again to the person we once were.

Saint John beautifully describes this in the passage we heard as our second reading today. "See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are." When we hear these words today we can imagine God taking care of us as if God were a parent or a nurse.

Saint John goes on to describe what happens next. "We are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Today those words express our hope that God will receive Dorothy to an eternal home with the unimaginable joys offered to those who are God's own children. As Dorothy was faithful to God throughout her life, we have confident hope in God's faithfulness to her today.

In this spirit of giving and receiving, perhaps we could each think today of what we have received from Dorothy - her values, her vision, her goals and her loves. And think of some way that we can give those to others. That is one way to honor Dorothy's life and to bring her home again and again. Giving what we have received would be a simple but concrete way that we could say to her what she so frequently said to others: "Love and peace to you, Dorothy. Love and peace to you."

Friday, July 26, 2019