

Sharyn Connor

Sharyn Connor never let the present stand in the way of the future. Throughout her career as an educator, she was not content with the way students were. She wanted to make them better. In fact, she was not content with the way teachers were. She wanted them better as well. A teacher herself for 25 years, a principal for 17 years, the founder of a special needs Kindergarten program, and an inspiration to future principals, Sharyn's extraordinary vision for what *could be* helped her see what *is* - in all its possibility.

Sharyn was an exceptionally loving wife and mother. She got things done. She made things right. Through nearly fifty years of marriage she committed herself to her family, scooping up the lives of her husband and daughter and transporting them far beyond what they could imagine.

Here at the cathedral, she served as a leader on our pastoral council and on Sundays as a sacristan, reader and communion minister. She stands among a select group of our members to receive the bishop's recognition award for her service to this community.

I have rarely heard a reader at mass proclaim God's word with such understanding as Sharyn did. Even when her illness altered the sound of her voice, I could still hear God's word through her lips. When she received her diagnosis, she told me she was going to live every day positively and to surround herself only with people who would look beyond the present into the future. That inspired me. I wanted to be part of that circle. I wanted to see the beauty of the world and the fruitfulness of her life with all the excitement she had, even when she got sick.

Committed as she was to the ministry of wisdom, how fitting for us to hear first among today's scripture readings a passage from the book that bears that name. Right now, in the midst of our sorrow at the untimely death of a person whose life mirrored justice, we need wisdom. This is how the bible describes the souls of people like Sharyn: "They are in peace.... Their hope is full of immortality; Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them, and found them worthy of himself."

True education extends far beyond the classroom. It steers the way people live, the decisions they make. A good educator gives not only formation to the mind but also food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, welcome to strangers, clothing to the naked, care for the ill, and visits to the imprisoned. In Jesus' parable, those who don't do that are like goats separated into a field apart. We believe that God would keep Sharyn among the sheep, but I think she would not be content there; if she knew there were wayward goats in the next pasture, she would stray outside her fence, find those goats, and educate them.

Sharyn imitated in her life what she experienced from God. Jesus entered this world as the good shepherd, the one who could see us not just for who we are but who we could be. Today we gather because through people like Sharyn we have received the same vision. What God has made so wonderfully in the person of a wife, mother, teacher and minister, he can remake even better. God never lets a sorrowful present stand in the way of a glorious future.

Tuesday, September 3, 2019