

February 12, 2010 – The Funeral of Martha Cook

I don't think I ever saw Martha without a smile on her face. She enjoyed life, she enjoyed her family, she enjoyed her friends, and she enjoyed you. She enjoyed 3 Musketeers' candy bars, too, but that's another story. When you think of it, hers was a simple hard-working life. She came from Weston, married her husband Milton, and they started a store in Winston. She worked 16-18 hours a day, 7 days a week, never took a nap and never got sick. She gave birth to five children and she had to endure the death of Johnny. She had her sorrows, but she kept a lot to herself, she spoke her mind when she needed to, she kept her kids in line, she made cast iron hamburgers and chocolate pie, she read her magazines, and she smiled a lot. I don't know how on earth she did all this, but she did. Milton died at the age of 54 back in 1973. Martha has been a widow for 37 years. She traveled all over North America and Europe. She was a Catholic all her life and became more active with the Church in her later years. Her health was probably not all that good, but it never stopped her from enjoying what God gave her in life.

Isaiah says, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples. . . . The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces." Isaiah imagines a people who just need someone to take care of them, someone to feed them, someone to comfort them when they were sad, and to correct them when they were wrong. This beautiful passage makes you think that Martha had God in her bones, that the way she took care of people was the way God does this. It's comforting to think that she has been an ambassador for a provident God all these many years.

A lot of times we don't even reflect on how God is providing for us. We take for granted all the good things that happen to us. At the Last Supper, Jesus comforted his disciples with the news that his Father's house had many dwellings, and that he would provide the way for them there. At that meal he shared his body and blood, and he gave them a vision for a future in which he would not be with them, but he would be with them in another way.

One of the things we learn about Jesus from the gospels is that he was never far away whenever food was close at hand. Jesus was present at the Last Supper and he remains present at every eucharist we share. And in some way, Jesus was present at every meal that Martha prepared. He was in her sacrifice. He was in her labor. He was in the taste of the food. He was in its strength. You don't always realize it when Christ is there, but he is wherever there is goodness, and especially whenever there is love.

My brothers and sisters, let us follow Christ. He longs to sup with us and to guide us on the way. As we acclaim his providential care, supplying people to take care of us, let us be ready to take care of others. For when we serve them, we serve Christ, and when we serve Christ, it will make us smile.