

Isabelle's granddaughter Taira wrote these words: "Just know, let your soul hear, that I thank you for all the time you spent with me when we were painting, or I was watching you paint. Thank you for the patience and determination you showed throughout your life. Thank you for showing me the calm and beauty in nature, and how to get a kick out of life and enjoy it when the opportunity comes. Know that my heart speaks to your heart always. You will be with me, you are a part of me forever."

Isabelle lived a full and wonderful life. She volunteered for the Red Cross and the Navy WAVES; she was a Girl Scout leader. She loved animals. She worked as a commercial artist with an advertising agency and did china painting. She painted statues, nativity scenes, Stations of the Cross and Easter candles. She sang in the choir at church. She attended mass faithfully and obeyed the laws of the Church. She and her husband Johnnie raised a family of wonderful kids, encouraging them along the way, and holding them up when they might otherwise have fallen down. She was a fiercely independent woman, and she crammed a lot of living into a very full life.

To see her these last few years was difficult because we all knew we were watching a woman with exceptional skills, living faith, and a loving heart, slowly letting go of all the gifts she had received and shared so generously. Even now, we know there is more to her than meets the eye. The Book of Wisdom says of good people who die, "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed in the view of the foolish to be dead. . . . But they are in peace." Isabelle would want us to think of her now in no other way. She is in peace.

Jesus promised rest to those who labored and were burdened. No matter the load you carry, he shares it by his presence, his teaching, and his community of believers. Isabelle personally experienced the image that Jesus gives: "my yoke is easy, my burden light." She shouldered her responsibilities with the joy that comes from serving others and the ease that comes with love. She hoped in Christ, and he gave her support time after time. Saint Paul's words ring very true. "Hope does not disappoint. . . . Since we are now justified by the Blood of Christ, we will be saved through him."

My brothers and sisters, as we gather today to reflect on this life, we feel a mixture of sorrow and gratitude. We need reminders that believing in Christ, praising God's name, and serving other people bring rewards. Those actions help us lift our burdens with confidence, shoulder them in strength, and carry them in joy. Life has many difficult days, but the sorrow is tempered by the service; the struggle is lightened by love. As we step forth from this experience of Isabelle's life, let us recommit ourselves to the fire of faith that enlivens the hearts of believers and guides us on pathways of hope.