

Wilma Carroll embodied the spirit of this town. She cared about other people. She kept a strong faith. She knew her limitations, and she took advantage of her possibilities. To me she was as dear and sweet as any woman I've known. She kept a peaceful disposition about her, and she always seemed wise and loving.

Her children remember her as sensitive and proud, kind, loving and generous. She loved her flowers in the garden, her family at home, and her Lord in heaven. She also loved Daniel O'Donnell. And Lawrence Welk. And the Golden Girls, Andy Griffith, and I Love Lucy. But she wasn't just about television. She loved to dance. She enjoyed Tuesday night dinners at the Elks Club. She travelled. She had fun meeting her husband's buddies at army reunions and stayed in touch with their families as well. She grew up in Weatherby, went to school, and worked factory jobs, but most people knew Wilma as a wife, a mother, and a grandmother. She kept a good house; she knew where things were, even if nobody else did. She was proud of her family, and she had every reason to be. They all learned the value of hard work. When Wilma was a young mother, somebody had to keep those kids in line; somebody had to get them ready for church on Sundays. Somebody had to take care of them whenever an accident happened – and there were plenty of those. I can't imagine Wilma as a strict disciplinarian, but her kids tell me there were days.

We come to church today at the end of Wilma's life because this was the center of her life. Her faith in God directed her thoughts and actions. The eucharist meant everything to her, and she even visited the sick with our ministers who brought communion to them. St. Paul says, "No one lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Wilma believed this with all her heart and lived it with all her strength. In the first reading we heard what Job said when hardships struck his life. His faith was so strong he wanted his words written down. He says, "That with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever! I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust; whom I myself shall see: my own eyes, not another's, shall behold him; and from my flesh I shall see God." After Jesus rose from the dead, two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize him in their midst until he broke bread with them. Wilma met Jesus time and time again in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup here in this church. Now as she completes her journey, we pray that she will discover Jesus present at another table, for a meal she did not have to fix.

The commands of Jesus come down to two statements: Love God and love your neighbor. Every so often we get to experience the example of people who practically breathe those commands. We are grateful for Wilma's life, and we trust that her love of God and neighbor will continue to influence us, so that as we continue our journey, we will be better companions of Jesus Christ.