

## Judith Gardner

This small gathering cannot conceal the greatness of the sorrow that accompanies the death of Judith Gardner. She was a loving mother, a faithful member of this cathedral parish, and a woman much admired for her devotion to her family, her community and even to people she did not know. Just a few years ago she suffered the loss of her sister and her father; both funerals took place in this cathedral. She endured these losses along with other challenges in her life.

Judith lived with diabetes for 40 years. She did not complain. She simply found ways to use her life for the benefit of other people. Her heart was so filled with love that she became a model for those who knew her and benefited from her kindness. Many of you in turn showed charity to her, especially in her times of need.

Judith left us during Holy Week, at a time when Christians meditate on the death and resurrection of Christ, as well as the meaning of those events for those who believe in him. In this Easter Time, as we dwell in the joy of the resurrection and breathe the hope of new life, we draw support from all other believers in this moment of loss.

From John's gospel this afternoon we heard some of the words Jesus spoke concerning this mystery. These words resound with hope, a message we all need to hear whenever we meditate upon death. Jesus said, "the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation." That message is either comforting or sobering, depending on who you are. Jesus offered this reassurance: "whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life."

The Book of Revelation sheds even more light on the same theme: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," it says. "Let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them." Together these passages proclaim hope to the living and the dead. Those who have done good works while they lived will carry them along when they die. Those who lie in the tombs will still hear the voice of the Lord, and if they believe in him, if they believe his words, even in death, they will rise to eternal life.

As this message comforts us at this time of loss, it also challenges us to live according to the gospel of Christ. It inspires us to perform good works sincerely for the benefit of others. It summons us to listen for the voice of Christ so that we will recognize it even from the tomb. Judith gave us a model to follow because she followed Christ, the Good Shepherd whose sheep know the sound of his voice. As we mourn her loss this day, those of us within this cathedral and those outside its walls, let us also recommit ourselves to lives of charity and obedience: charity to our neighbor and obedience to the voice of Christ, who calls us and brings us to life.

Tuesday, May 5, 2020