

For several years Mary received care while suffering a variety of ailments such as diabetes, heart problems, and disabilities making it difficult for her to walk or raise her arms. If your eyes told you this was a woman who couldn't do much, you were wrong. Mary kept what was important to her: her faith, her family, and her sense of humor. She was blessed with many talents as well as the opportunities to use them. She was a wonderful mother – the kind of mother who cares for kids, dresses them right, nurses their illnesses, and cooks great food. She owned the local newspaper and balanced her professional life with an extraordinary ability to paint. She came from Maine, but she invested herself in this community, and she made it a better place. She loved her 9 children, and she especially loved her husband, Joe.

Joe and Mary used to say they would never go to a nursing home. But in a sense, the nursing home came to them. They have been living on property they once owned. Mary didn't want to be apart from Joe. Sometimes they were separated: one in this home, one in that hospital. And even when they were under the same roof, she didn't like being on separate wings, in different rooms. When you saw the two of them together, you knew they were made for each other. They gave us an example of what marriage can be when you live it for over 60 years.

Nobody likes being sick, and sometimes it is hard visiting people who are sick. But when you visited Mary, she brightened your day. She used to shrug off her problems; in her matter-of-fact way, she told me about her health, "This is what you can expect if you live to be this old."

St. Paul was not that old when he wrote to the Corinthians. He suffered persecution and illness, but he believed that the One who raised Jesus from the dead would raise him up as well. He wrote, "We are not discouraged. Although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." He says of his tremendous suffering, "This momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." Paul had tremendous faith in the resurrection, and he gave thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his love is everlasting.

Paul wrote about his faith, and that's what Job wanted to do. Job had lost everything – his family, his property, and his health, and yet he believed that God would rescue him; he *knew* that God would rescue him. "Would that my words were written down," he cried out, "that with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever!"

Mary Rooney chiseled her values in the newspaper, her painting, this community, her friends, and above all in her family. She wanted everyone to know what mattered in life. That is why we gather here in faith. We have learned from Mary and others like her. Now we must live what we have learned. Let us give thanks today for Mary's wonderful life, and for the promise that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with him and place us in his presence.