

## Penny Dunst

As a Royals fan I forgave Penny for being a White Sox fan only because she grew up on the south side of Chicago. Her faithfulness to that team was emblematic of her fidelity in all that mattered in her life: her husband, her kids, her grandkids, her work, her charities, and her church. Penny married Robert in 1966 and lost him 17 years later. Of their seven children, the youngest was one when Robert died. When she explained this to me a few years ago, I gasped. She shook her head and said, “All things are in God’s plan.” In difficult times she loved to reassure people, “The Lord will provide.” Her life bore evidence to that.

Penny raised those seven children on her own. To support her family, she found work at temp agencies and grocery stores. She sacrificed to put her kids into Catholic schools. She sewed dresses for her girls. She put other people ahead of her. She especially enjoyed volunteering here on Fridays at Morning Glory Ministries, where she helped serve breakfast and arrange emergency assistance. For ten years she arrived early and stayed late. There are people who run away from the homeless; Penny ran toward them. At the cathedral she was a money counter and a communion minister. She contributed to the collection. She bragged about her kids and the grandkids, whom she adored.

It was as if Robert had bequeathed extra strength to her. She accomplished a lot on her own. She liked it that way and resisted it if you told her she could not do something. Even when her physical and mental abilities diminished, she still did things her way. She loved coming to Mass here and didn’t like it if Mass was short. One day she was so determined to get here that she walked two and half miles to Zona Rosa and took the bus. She loved being independent, but she was never alone. She believed in the presence of God.

When Penny died, her family found a bible verse with her, one that she prayed often, the one that we heard as the second reading today. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” Other people facing the same adversities Penny had would whine and grow angry with God, but she trusted even more as she realized that God was giving her strength.

We all need strength—when our baseball team is having a rough year or a person we relied on has suddenly gone. But whenever hope lessens, one person remains, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray today that as Penny was faithful to him, he will now be faithful to her, bringing her the rewards he promised to those who are poor in spirit, meek, who mourn, and make peace.

Some of us say we care about family, work, church, and those who have less, but we don’t always give them much time. We may tell ourselves we have too many other challenges that get in the way, so we just can’t do the things we like to do. We should think again. I know someone who faced adversities but found a way to do what mattered most to her. May Penny rest in peace.

Friday, March 26, 2021