

Irene Rooney got her satisfaction out of doing for others without needing something done in return. She cared for her husband in times of joy and loss. She raised her children and tended them in times of crisis. She prepared elaborate meals for her family, at the table, without the television, so people could speak and be heard. She helped people look their best. She always looked stylish – even when it was Halloween. She appreciated people who just did their job, and she tipped service workers with home made peanut clusters. Given her reputation for cinnamon rolls, Cameron will be a little skinnier now that she is gone.

Irene was a very private person about her illness. She didn't want people to know when she was hospitalized or feeling low. Maybe she was proud, but she didn't want you to worry about her. She wanted life to be pleasant and filled with hope.

And it was. She enjoyed traveling to see the sights and watch parades. She loved going out on the town, especially if meant dancing. Dance filled her with life. She liked to be seen dancing, because her perpetual youth brought a smile to everyone's face.

She always liked to sit in the back of church. In the 3 years I've been here, this is the closest she's been to the altar throughout an entire mass.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus looked over the crowds and taught them how to be good disciples. He blessed those who were poor in spirit, who mourned, those who were meek and who hungered and thirsted for justice. He blessed the merciful, the clean of heart and the peacemakers, as well as those persecuted for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He named all those people blessed.

In the Book of Revelation, another group of people is named blessed. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Let them rest from their labors, for their works accompany them." The first reading we heard this morning is very brief, but it summarizes the lives of people like Irene, people who worked for the sake of others, who lived in the Lord, and who died in the Lord. They are blessed.

And we are blessed for having come to know them. Sometimes the Beatitudes seem too difficult to observe. It is hard to accept persecution and misunderstanding. It is hard to be clean of heart, to make peace with those who hurt us, and to be merciful all the time to those in need. We need the good example of people who have lived as disciples of Jesus, so we know it can be done.

Today we thank God for the gift of Irene's long life. It is a sign to us of the care God gives us. God also gets satisfaction out of doing for us without needing something done in return. But we like to return the favor. God is so good we want to please him. Imagine that kind of world, where

we outdo each other in kindness – not needing something in return, just for the happiness it brings.