

We lost Francie three days ago, and this is the quietest she's been in 64 years. Francie loved to talk. Some people love to talk and you just wish they'd finish, but when she talked you wished it would never end. She could talk with her sisters on the phone by the hour. Sometimes she would talk on and on with Martha without realizing that her sister had just fallen asleep. It wouldn't surprise me if members of the phone company are here mourning her death as well.

Francie found life interesting and that made her interesting. She was excited about all the opportunity in life, and it was hard to keep up with her. She loved history. She loved public television. Ask her about any topic and she'd talk about it, or she'd look it up, or she'd send you newspaper clippings about it. The eight O'Connor children went to eight different colleges. Seven of them went to the same college, and Francie went to seven different colleges. There was too much to learn, but she finished. She met her goal.

She had vision and charisma. She would imagine a play, she wrote it, and she got people to do it. She could make you sing. She could make you dance. Who else would even think of having the O'Connor family perform their own version of Riverdance? Who else would convince them to do it? And who would laugh harder than she did?

By her own definition, Fran was not the oldest of the O'Connor children. She was the first. She did not live as many years as her mother. But she lived as intensely. It's almost like she was in a hurry because she knew she wouldn't have any extra years to fit it all in.

Francie faced this illness with the same spirit she used in good health. She stayed interested in you, not turned in on herself. She got you to laugh, not to weep. She got you to put silly wigs on her head, not to try to cover up her cancer. In my last conversation with her, we talked about serious things – like dying and God. But we spent as much time talking about chocolate.

Jesus worked many miracles. He got cripples to walk, he got the blind to see, and he got bread for the hungry. His believers came to realize he was the messiah, the promised one. Jesus still knows our needs and enables us to rise to our potential. Francie worked the same miracles. She brought life where there was boredom. She brought laughter where there was fear. She made people want to become like her. But she wanted people to become like Christ, the miracle-worker who preceded her.

Rich wrote a lovely ode to remember Fran. He calls her “our organizer of the dance, the author and crafter of our play, the one to care, to comfort, to help you end the day.” As Rich says we come here today for the last act in Fran’s own play. Once again, she is the driving force behind this gathering. But as she goes from us now, she meets her match – the God who gave her a part to play, a starring role, and who leads her onto a heavenly stage where even angels applaud.