

# Eleanor O'Connor

Eleanor used to be my neighbor here, and what first struck me about her was that at the age of 80, she was looking for new ways to get involved at the church.

She was very proud of her past. She served as Assistant Jackson County Clerk for 34 years, was a Jackson County Committeewoman, and a political activist. And if anybody didn't know this, she was a Democrat. I mean, if a Republican appeared on television, she switched channels.

She was very proud of her family. She was proud of every one of her children, and when they had children she was proud of every one of them. She showed up for family events. She loved playing games. She was a widow for nearly 20 years; you almost forget what a good wife she had been earlier in her life. She held within her an immense store of love. No matter how much she gave it away, there was always plenty more inside.

She gave away possessions, too. She was generous to the poor and supported a number of charities.

She lived a long, healthy life. She drove her own car and lived on her own well into her senior years.

She had a lot to be proud of. Yet she was not prideful; she never looked down on people. You just knew when you were in her presence, that this was a special lady.

She leaves us during the season of Lent, at a time when the Church is preparing to celebrate the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. During this time we willingly take on loss. We abstain from some foods and drinks. We perform more actions of charity toward others. We devote more time to prayer. We plant a seed that we know will spring to life when we renew our faith at Easter.

Jesus used this image of a seed shortly before his own death. He had warned his followers several times that he would be arrested and put to death. Because they objected to this idea, he compared life to a grain of wheat. If you want a harvest, you have to plant the wheat. If you want love to flourish, you have to sacrifice. If you want eternal life, you have to accept death.

In the final conversation from her hospital bed last week, Eleanor said, "I'm ready to go home." God had granted her a blessed life: good health, terrific family, meaningful job, and a church to believe in. She lived to see the harvest of the sacrifices she had made. We gather today in faith that she will live again to see the eternal harvest of the sacrifices she made. As we strive to imitate her joy, let us also imitate her service, that not our work, but God's work may be done.