

Rita wanted to be like us. She wanted to live and work like other people, have a family. It was hard for her to understand why God made her disabled. It's hard for any of us to understand why God makes the disabled. It's hard, that is, unless you got to know somebody like Rita Monteil. Rita was God's way of helping us look at life a little bit differently. Important concerns demand our attention--education, employment, parenthood, family life, self-sufficiency. These concerns consume our life--They're good things, but Rita could not have them the way we do. Still, she had life, she had love, she had friendship. She had opinions. She kept us from getting caught up in things we could really do without, because she did so well with less. She drew our attention toward the things that really mattered. She pulled out from us a capacity for love that we didn't know we had. God knew just what he was doing when he made Rita.

God also knew what he was doing when he made Rita a Monteil. Paul and Eileen, tonight we celebrate Rita--how she fought the good fight and ran the good race. But if you want to be a champ, you need a good coach. Rita had two of the best. Marilyn, Katy, Patty, Jim, Paul, and Joe, the example of loving care that you gave to your sister has inspired our community and made us better people. Your sister touched more than this community--This afternoon I got a phone call from Green River, Wyoming--from the bishop of Cheyenne, Joseph Hart. He asked me to express his grief to you and to tell you that Rita always had a way of picking him up if he was feeling down. He treasures the last visit he made to your home. At this very moment he is confirming a the youth of Green River, Wyoming, and praying for Rita. God knew what he was doing.

Rita wanted to be like us, but fact is, we all wanted to be like her--surrounded by friends, unashamed of telling people what we think, finding simple solutions to complex problems, and loving birthdays, *loving* birthdays, unconcerned about how old we're getting. Who wouldn't want to be like that?

In truth, Rita was like us, and we are like her. With Rita, we are created by God as human beings. With her, we are loved by our creator, just for who we are. We have the ability to love more, even when we think we don't. And we all stare at the door of death, fearful to go through, but confident of what lies beyond, the source of all our love. We are like Rita. We are disabled--maybe not in our physical development, but in our spiritual development. We don't see well the right decisions; we don't hear well the voice of God, we don't feel well the value of all human life. Our minds are crippled, searching for truth. Now, there's just one difference between her and us. Rita is no longer disabled. One day, we shall be like her.

Rita Monteil funeral 30.iv.96