

Connie lived to be 100 years old, which brings a feeling of completion to her life. But the number of years doesn't tell the full story. Connie lived each one of those days within the arms of the Catholic Church, where her faith inspired her to participate frequently at Mass, read the bible, and pray the rosary. Faith also guided her service to other people, especially her husband Max, whom she tended with great love at the time he needed it the most. Faith also filled her heart with joy. Service and prayer gave completion to Connie's life. Whether she was alone sewing or working in her garden, or with others cooking in the kitchen, she just loved life. She loved being with people, especially the members of her family. She enjoyed eating and drinking with the people who were closest to her, and those people were family.

When I arrived at the cathedral to serve as pastor five years ago, Consuelo was my next door neighbor in the Towers. Occasionally, I'd hear from her or from some member of her family. It seemed like everyone called her Aunt Connie. She had a lot of nieces and nephews, but everyone else also felt completely at home with her. For a woman who had no children of her own, she had one of the largest families imaginable.

Families hang together best when people look out for one another, and Connie showed the beauty of a life that results from sacrifice. She followed the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Connie leaves us at the end of Easter Time this year, during the days between our celebration of the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost Sunday. Easter celebrates the joy of the resurrection of Christ, who sacrificed himself so that we might have life. St. Paul explains this in the passage we hear today from Romans: "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." And again, "Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him."

That is remarkable enough, but Paul recalled this example because of the way that each of us participates in resurrection already through our baptism. He says, "we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." So just as the Father raised Jesus from death to life, so "by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life." This faith brings joy to Christians. We are already sharing in the blessed life of Christ because we believe in him and follow him. Paul then brings these thoughts to their climax: "if we have grown into union with [Christ] through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection."

My brothers and sisters, even as we experience the sadness of Connie's death, faith brings us joy today. We loved her, we enjoyed her company, and we try to follow her example of prayer, service and joy. We will miss her. But she above all would want us to find joy in the promise of the resurrection for all those who die in Christ.

As we look forward to Pentecost Sunday this weekend, let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour gifts upon each one of us. May we find greater joy in our prayer, more energy to serve, and a deeper measure of love to make our lives complete.