

Beatrice Ramirez

Beatrice had a long, happy life of grace. In a way, that's an improbable thing to say because of the many challenges she faced. Her father died when she was very young; she helped raise her own younger siblings. Later in life she suffered the death of her husband Nicholas. Her daughter Anna developed cancer, so Beatrice quit her job and cared for her until Anna died. Then Beatrice's son Michael died of the same disease. She even lost a granddaughter. Beatrice believed in doing things the right way, but that involved considerable sacrifice: preparing home-cooked meals for her kids, providing hospitality to visitors, exercising proper manners, forgiving those who caused offense, supporting others who experienced troubles, giving up a restful retirement in order to take care of grandchildren, dealing with dementia in her siblings and in herself. Throughout these sorrows, she remained at peace. She learned lessons from life, harbored no ill will, and left justice in the hands of God. She never felt sorry for herself. Faith gave her fuel, and she burned it each day in love. She had a lot of love to give, and her family received it most.

This cathedral has been a part of her long life. Beatrice and Nicholas were married here 68 years ago. All five of their children were baptized here. Beatrice taught catechism here as well. Some other person may not have been able to assemble these pieces into a long, happy life of grace. But Beatrice did.

Fittingly, the family chose for our first reading today a passage from the book the bible calls "Lamentations". When life becomes unfair, some people get angry; others lament. Anger eats away at the soul, lament airs out the soul; it gives a person a place to express torment and set it free. This passage is especially beautiful. It was written thousands of years ago after the people of ancient Israel had lost everything. Enemies had stormed Jerusalem, slaughtered its leaders, captured the survivors, and destroyed its temple. One witness surveying that bleak landscape composed these words: "My soul is deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is; I tell myself my future is lost, all that I hoped for from the Lord." That is a lament, but then, because this writer was honest, not angry; sincere, not mean; filled with faith, not despair; these words come next: "But I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope: The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; They are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness." This captures a great deal of Beatrice's spirit. She poured out her sorrows to the Lord, but she also knew the promise of each new day.

Death makes each of us lament. We all have challenges we have overcome, and some that we did not. We could be angry, but anger usually eats the person who harbors it more than it harms the one who receives it. Honest lamentation is one way to let go of the injustice; its release can clear a path for the arrival of hope.

Today we lament the loss of a great lady who learned from life and taught us its lessons. We believe that the favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent. Let us unite our prayers for the repose of Beatrice's soul and unite our purpose in accepting the challenges of life so that we too may harbor hope.

Wednesday, August 31, 2022