

Alvina Castro

Alvina's life was expansive in years yet focused in values. Of course she loved her family and was proud of its many generations. She loved to dance and loved to cook, and it seemed that everyone had their favorite dish that she alone could prepare. Alvina discovered in her advancing years a love for the most vulnerable—especially disadvantaged children in need. She received the Esther award for her service, but the real reward for her was simply being able to love more and more kids.

Alvina's faith was important to her, and she made this cathedral part of her spiritual life. Here she worshiped God in gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the example of his mother, who stood by the side of her Son from his infancy to the cross. The Blessed Virgin Mary cared for her helpless Son, as Alvina cared for many helpless children both within and outside her immediate family.

All of us are helpless children, as St. Paul wrote to the Romans. We face the same temptations as those who are ungodly, yet we have extra help through our faith. Paul writes, "Christ, while we were still helpless, died at the appointed time for the ungodly." We did not earn the sacrifice of Christ; he gave up his life out of love. We admire selfless love, a love that expects nothing in return. That kind of love frequently shines from within those who spend their time, as Alvina so generously did, volunteering for others.

Her death leaves a hole in the hearts of those who loved her and throughout a community that could not fully realize her impact. To those who grieve, St. Paul has more words of comfort: "Hope does not disappoint." Alvina hoped in God for a share in the resurrection of Christ. Christ offers us reconciliation with the estranged, forgiveness of sins, the assurance of mercy, and a fearless hope.

Christ loved us though we did not earn it, and he inspired us to love him in return. Alvina loved others even when they did not earn it. She especially loved infants who had no way of thanking her, but she derived great satisfaction from sharing the gifts she had.

In her later years, Alvina saw the fruits of her love coming home to her. When she could no longer do the things she did as a younger woman, no longer demonstrate in countless ways the love in her heart, she became the recipient of the gift of herself that she gave others. As she had cared for others, so her family cared for her in the years when she needed it most. People knew what to do for her in these final years because she had already shown the way throughout her life.

We entrust Alvina today to the loving arms of her Savior, Jesus Christ, who has already given up his life that we might have hope. May God guide all of us here in the paths of loving kindness especially for those who cannot adequately say thanks for the mercy we show. Loving others brings the greatest reward.