

+Rosie Benke -- June 2, 2020

Mike and family and all those close to +Rosie --these days we feel much compassion for your loss of +Rosie; and much sadness at our loss of her – such a good person – caring person – holy person and woman of faith.

At first we see only what we have all lost – her not being there to support us, care for us, comfort us, to teach us and correct us and to challenge us and to inspire us.

We think about and mourn all that has been lost in her death and being no longer living among us.

But we also need to stop and realize that along with all the loss that we experience there is the fact that all she did and all that God gave us through her life has not been lost. Our lives and the lives of so many others were helped and changed forever through her life and actions and her concern and her prayers.

All the gifts that we her family and community have received through her 72 years of life are not lost.

All the actions of her life are not forgotten or lost by God either. The book of Revelation says, “Blessed are those who have died in the Lord. Let them rest from their labors for their good deed go with them.” Jesus in today’s gospel assured us that she was blessed and will be blessed in the life to come – “Rejoice and be glad, he said, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

All is not lost unless we fail to appreciate or use or hold onto the gifts that we received through her life.

So how do we best hold on to these gifts and appreciate these gifts? -- It is especially through praising and thanking God for them.

When meeting with me last week - +Rosie’s family shared with me that she made use of many prayer books in her prayers and that she did a lot of spiritual reading to keep up her faith. This is maybe a little like me. I read and skim through a lot of spiritual material – I have done this since I was a young boy. And I will

always remember going through the Ben Franklin store and the Hartz store in Thief River Falls and skimming over kiosks of books for sale while my mother was doing her shopping. One of the books or series of books that always fascinated me and I would skim over were the books on the praise of God by a man named Merlin Carothers. (I believe the overall title of the books was “The Power of Praise.”) I finally bought and read a couple of them when I was older. The central theme of all his books was that we should praise God at all times and in all situations even when things are most difficult and painful. He said we always need to do this because God is always working for our good and bringing good for us and others even out of the worst things that happen to us. We cannot always see this at first, but in the end we do.

We see this happening these days with the coronavirus pandemic. Many people are suffering and dying, but we also see many good things coming out and being learned through these difficult times. And so it can be for us in our grief over the death of +Rosie.

When we feel overwhelmed with grief – when we feel angry at God for our loss – when we feel lost and do not know what to do – the best thing we can do is to remember and to praise God for all that he gave us and did for us through +Rosie’s life.

In the end we not have all the answers to our “why” questions but we can always praise God for his blessings and for not forgetting us and continuing to sustain in all kinds of different way through the difficult times like this.

As Jesus said many times to his disciples and to us before returning to heaven -- “I am with you always until the end of time.”

We have heard God’s word to us today – helping us through St. Paul to understand +Rosie’s readiness for the life to come as he says – “We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, eternal in heaven.” And also his reflection that as believers “we walk by faith, now and

not by sight, and that sometimes “we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord.”

We have listened to the prayers and songs and these thoughts, but in the end the best thing we can do is praise God for his blessing and presence that he is always with us and today we turn now in this Mass to lift up our thanks and praise to God for the blessing of +Rosie and her life that was given to us and remains with us and for confidence we have in faith that she is in peace with God and that his grace and mercy are with her now and forever.