

So often in the past, the presence of a lighted candle has been a distinctive feature in many noteworthy movies. The flickering flame illuminated a darkened room, enabling the dwellers of the house to feel a sense of security. On the other hand, the death of a person was often marked by the blowing out of the candle by a gust of wind. For the moviegoer, it seemed like the worst of all possible tragedies, the dying of the light. In one of Shakespeare's tragedies, Macbeth, the tragic figure and main character, offers a rather despairing view of human life: "Out, out, brief candle--- life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and is heard no more". The candle represents the frailty of human life. Macbeth calls it a brief candle, meaning a short candle that burns briefly. It burns down and the flame goes out. And then it is completely dark.

On prominent display in our church is the Paschal (or Easter) candle. It burns brightly during this funeral mass. The lighting of the Paschal candle is one of the solemn moments of the Easter vigil service. It symbolizes Christ, the Light of the World, who, by his cross and Resurrection, triumphed over death on the morn of Easter Sunday. The light of the candle reminds us that death does not have the final word, that the Light of Christ is stronger than death. In the words of the author of the fourth gospel: "In Him was life and the light was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it" (Jn. 1:4-5).

Light is a symbol of god in virtually all religions. In the creed one of the articles of our Catholic faith is that Jesus is "God from God, Light from Light".

A light burned brightly in the soul of Jean Halpin. It was not the gaudy artificial light of Times Square or the Las Vegas strip, but a gentle, subdued heavenly light, a deep and profound mystery which is called grace. Jesus promises that "he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (Jn.8:12).. As the mother of ten children Jean was an exemplary witness to the Divine Light .What can we possible say of a woman who organized the first perpetual Eucharistic adoration in the Capital District and was a driving force in the Blue Army, a Marian organization.

Christ is the one whose power whose power reaches beyond our biological deaths, granting us eternal life. His radiance shines upon us so that we can walk through the darkness of this world to the life that is everlasting.

In the funeral liturgy we pray that perpetual light shine upon the deceased. "And let perpetual life shine upon her". I have little doubt that, like the stars in the night sky, a light shines on Jean Halpin, and unlike the burning candle, will never be extinguished.

May she rest in peace!