

Memorial Service for Elaine Ann DelMonico

November 9, 2019

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.” (Isaiah 43:1)

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In general, there is a certain fear of death, because of its finality. There is no turning back from death, no reprieve, no changing of one's mind. Death is not only final; it is also inevitable. No one escapes death. St. Augustine said, we begin to die the moment we are born.

But death also has its beautiful side, its positive value, for it is a goal, an arrival, the end of a pilgrimage. This is especially true of those whose life here on earth has shone forth the beauty of God's love for us, those who responded to that love with grateful faith and shared that love with others, beginning in the family and extending out to those in need.

Today we commemorate with sorrow the passing of just such a person, Elaine Ann DelMonico. St. Irenaeus is famous for having said, “The glory of God is a person fully alive,” and those who knew Elaine could point to her as an example. At home she cared for her family, and at work she was meticulous in carrying out her duties, but she could also express her personal self-respect in her love of music and of fashionable clothing.

God and the saints were never far from her side, both in public worship and in private prayer. Her faith was solid and strong, and served as a light to guide her. It also provided her with peace of heart.

Today's memorial liturgical readings serve as a reminder of just how appropriate faith in God's loving Providence really is. Isaiah 43 sets the tone and quotes God as saying, “I have called you by name, you are mine”; Elaine has been called home by God, and through God's grace is now prepared for eternal life. Psalm 30 looks at the pains and troubles of life, from which Elaine was not spared, but reassures us in the prayer of v.3, “O Lord, my God, I cried out to you for help and you healed me.” Acts chapter 10 has St. Peter declare, “Whoever fears [the Lord] and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.” And in the Gospel itself from Luke 24, the companions said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way?” If we walk with Jesus, our hearts will burn with astonishment, gratitude, and love. And he will make himself known to us.

In a certain sense, our life here on earth is like a school, the school of life, if you will. And death is its commencement, a new beginning. We don't know what heaven is like, but St. Paul felt able to write to the Corinthians, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has the human heart

conceived, all the good things God has prepared for those who love him!” (1 Cor 2:9). And The Book of Revelation, chapter 21, is able to say, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. (21:3-7).

We take our leave of Elaine in sorrow and holy sadness, mindful of her many kindnesses, but we also rejoice with her, that she has negotiated her time spent here on earth so well, and we can be utterly assured, through God’s infinitely merciful love, that she is in peace.