

Reflections on the Pattern of Life: Elaine A. DelMonico

By Marc DelMonico

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Remarks prior to the beginning of the funeral liturgy.

Good morning ... and welcome.

I am so grateful that you are here to remember, honor and pray for my mom, Elaine.

We don't gather here by chance. Praying for those who have gone before us is an ancient practice, one which the Scriptures remind us is a holy act.

Additionally, we don't gather *here* by chance. This parish community was the one in which my mom was baptized in 1941. She was nourished by the Word of God and the bread of the altar – as well as by the music ministry at Blessed Sacrament Parish and here for many years as well. Her faith in our loving God – a bedrock of her life - was deeply nourished by this community, and the priests gathered here bear deep connections to our parish. I'm grateful for your presence as well.

There are many ways in which I have heard in these last days aspects of my mom's life and her relationship with others that have deeply touched and moved me. And there are many ways in which I could offer my limited insight on my mom here. I'm grateful for Fr. Scott who will share a bit more in his homily, but I want to focus on one aspect of

her life that touched me and everyone she knew – and that is her *routines*.

Everyone who knew my mom knew that she was a creature of habit and routine. She cleaned her own house daily until her illness made it impossible to do some of those chores, but continued to do everything she could.

She shoveled her own snow until her mid-70s. Either that or she guided (or rather demanded) others do it as thoroughly and carefully as she would have. Whenever there was a project done at her house, it had to be completed to her exacting specifications.

She maintained a budget and paperwork / bills BY HAND with meticulous care.

She attentively shopped for her groceries and other items on certain days of the week.

And we know that she had a whole set of routines around the foods she liked and didn't like! In the luncheon reception at the Fort Schyler club – to which everyone is invited after the services at the cemetery – we'll be able to enjoy some of those foods!

And her routines extended to her relationships. Whether it was daily or nearly daily phone calls with my aunt Phyllis, Arlene, Rita, or other relatives and friends, she made sure to call. She was always prepared for birthdays and family celebrations with a card or a gift – right down to writing on the envelope of the card the full name of the person - or “Robert Padula” for my late uncle and “Robert A Padula” for my cousin.

These were the details of routine which marked her life.

At times I and all of my family found these routines a source of consternation. “Why, mom” I would ask, “don’t you do something a little different today?,” perhaps trying to encourage her into a new habit or pattern that would be more helpful. Sometimes she took this advice; most often, she did not.

And she wanted to make sure that others adopted routines that were good for them. She always wanted to make sure we all wore jackets when it was cold outside. She advised people on their health, even as she struggled with caring for her own. She felt very strongly that certain things should be done in certain ways – often with a dismissive “that’s just the way I am.”

“That’s just the way I am.” ...

I reflected on this unique aspect of her life both during these last months and most especially these days when she has moved into her new home in heaven – almost certainly already setting up a routine that works for her.

As I thought about it, I realized that while her actions are what we, and she, called her “routine,” that there is another way to think about all that she did. A phrase we might use is “ritualized love.” Ritual is a word that Catholics understand; it is about repetition – not out of a sense of legalism or doing things by rote – though we know that some do. Rather we do ritual because we love: We love God, we love others. These guide so many rituals in our lives.

And when we do rituals we are invited to *remember* why we do what we do – the deeper meaning behind it. Why do we pray? Why do we marry? Why do we hold the pattern of public prayer Sunday after Sunday? We do so out of love and care for God and one another.

My mom's routines – care for her home, her appearance, family birthdays and events, and relationships – are all what love looked like in *practice* for her. They are the day-to-day repeatable actions of the practice of love. They are the way that she touched the lives of our entire family in small and large ways. They are the ways she practiced and demonstrated love for us.

That was just the ways she was
... just the ways she remains alive with God and in our hearts.

These are just one sliver of a reflection about my mom's life; I am grateful that she has touched us all so deeply that we are here to remember her and accompany her from death to new life.

As some have already done, I hope you will share with me in writing some of your own memories of life with my mom; I hope we can form a remembrance together in the coming days and weeks that I can share with all of us. Please reach out to me or the Matt Funeral Home to reach me.

As her health deteriorated over the past year, one thing surfaced as her deepest desire, even as she perhaps knew it wouldn't happen. She wanted to *go home* – to her house on Brinckerhoff Ave, but also to

resuming her daily travels that connected her with her sister, my family and others in our community. She wanted to be able to express again that love and care in her form of ritual - the true sacrament of her love.

As we pray for her together, and remember her, and entrust her to the Lord Jesus Christ in the promise of his deepest mercy and tender care, I ask a favor here –

So I can deliver a personal message to my mom.

It has taken not just one year of her life, but 78, and now her journey is over. So I have to tell her:

Mom ... You're here. Mom ... You're home! You're home.