

# Reflections on the Pattern of Life of Elaine DelMonico

by Marc DelMonico

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## *Prior to the beginning of the liturgy*

Good afternoon ... and welcome.

I am so grateful that you are here to remember, honor and pray for my mom, Elaine, especially as we begin this month of memory – the living memory - of those who have gone before us in faith.

We gather today confident that she is now home with our Blessed Mother, St. Jude, whose feast was Monday, and to whom my mom had a life-long devotion, St. Francis of Assisi, on whose feast day she died, and who is a profound influence in my life, and all the saints – along with her parents and deceased family and friends. She is home in the heart of Christ – whose heart is united with the hearts of all who know and love her.

I was going through many things recently at my mom's house, and I happened across a poem which I wrote when I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. It was a submission to a collection of art and poems and other writings from the members of my class as part of the class project as we prepared to 'move up' from grade school to another location for junior high.

The theme of the little book was "patterns." So my contribution was this poem – for which I am still waiting to be named U.S. poet laureate:

“Patterns are beautiful and nice. Please don’t turn them to ice. Have a heart; don’t let them go. I would feel mighty low.”

That’s it. That’s the poem.

When I read it again a few days ago, I thought of my mom.

Patterns were a part of her life. Whether it was the very elegant clothing she always wore – deeply rich in patterns of color and brightness - or the way in which she moved through her days.

Those who know my mom well know she was a creature of habit – or, perhaps another word for it - might be routine.

Routines were the pattern of her life.

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, *anytime* there was snow (and it snows a lot in Central New York!). Either she did it 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 paid her bills WITH CASH AND IN PERSON whenever possible, and with meticulous care, always careful to live within her means.

She attentively shopped for her groceries and other items on certain days of the week, often accompanied by my aunt Phyllis or me.

And she had a whole set of routines around the foods she liked and didn't like! The cookies we are all invited to share after the service today are some of her favorites which she enjoyed whenever she could.

Mom's routines extended to her relationships. Whether it was daily or nearly daily phone calls with my aunt Phyllis 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

These were the details of routine which marked her life.

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.” ... Patterns. Routine.

As I reflected on it further, I realized that while her actions are what we, and she, called her “routine,” there is another, spiritual or theological way to name these aspects of her life – “rituals of love.”

Rituals are about repetition – not out of a sense of legalism or doing things by rote. Rather we do ritual because we love: We love God, we love others. These loves guide so many rituals in our lives.

And when we do ritual we are invited to *remember* why we do what we do – the deeper meaning behind it. To make memory.

My mom's patterns of routine – 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.

In these ways, she sought to live the pattern of God's own life - lovingly and uniquely painted on the tapestry of our world for 78 bright years.

That was just the ways she was ...

... just the ways she remains, now *patterned*, fully and beautifully, in the risen Christ, with God forever.