

Let us pray:

**Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening
into the house and gate of heaven,
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,**

**where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling,
but one equal light;**

**no noise nor silence,
but one equal music;**

**no fears nor hopes,
but one equal possession;**

**no ends nor beginnings,
but one equal eternity;**

**in the habitations of thy majesty and glory,
world without end. Amen.¹**

Carol was small in stature but big in heart. One of her many ministries that helped me more than she knew was sending birthday and anniversary cards to the people of St. John's. Her cards were a tangible evidence of love and compassion. It was a way she showed that we are a community. That you matter. That life's milestones were noted. Carol saw a need and she worked to fill that need in quiet and oh-so-helpful ways. I will always be grateful for her awareness of a need and a willingness to fill that need.

Carol's last couple of years were not easy. Her health was challenging. Her ability to live independently was curtailed. In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, we are encouraged not to lose hope. Even as we acknowledge and accept that our outer shell – our physical body – is wasting away, our inner and spiritual nature can be renewed day-by-day when we trust in God and rest our hopes in the Lord.

A collector of many things, including ceramic mice, bells, teacups and angels, Carol made a warm and welcoming home. There was always something to talk about – be it why certain things appealed to her for collecting, learning about her needlework, or what book or books she was reading. She was someone who enjoyed reading and then passing along her books to another. In a sense, she was her own lending library. A generous and compassionate spirit.

Carol had a sense about needs that might exist and weren't being met. She founded the Montgomery County Mother of Twins Club, recognizing that other mothers of twins might need the same support and information that she sought. She wasn't afraid to try something new – and if it worked, great; if not, at least she tried. But it was a group that worked and through Carol's efforts other mothers found support in a situation that so easily can be overwhelming. And, I

¹ Excerpted by Eric Milner-White, dean of King's, from a sermon preached at Whitehall by John Donne on February 29, 1628

suspect that Carol's own children benefitted from Carol's vision and participation. God was working through Carol in helping her see where the needs of the world and her own gifts met. And she trusted in God enough to step out into a world that is not always welcoming and try. She trusted in her Lord when the Lord said "Do not be afraid,"

In her outside-the-home work life, Carol added her own knowledge of farming to those she worked with at the Agricultural and Stabilization Conservation Service. Her own experiences growing up on a farm influenced the decisions she was asked to make in helping farmers with loans, conservation efforts or purchasing of commodities. Carol remained close to the land throughout her life.

Just as Carol knew from first-hand experience, our physical life is not forever. Ask Bob or her children about "catching the chicken for dinner" and how Carol seemed to get stuck with washing the dishes as her sister somehow managed to avoid that task routinely.

Jesus reminded us that we can take comfort that our heavenly Father is waiting for us even though our physical body has run its course. And, our heavenly Father knows our needs before we do. Therefore we do not have to be troubled. Rather we can rest in the Lord, with a certainty that we are loved and we will be cared for into eternity. Perhaps one reason Psalm 23 is requested at many funerals is the vision it paints of not fearing.

Over and over in the Bible we read "do not be afraid." "Do not fear, for I am with you." We are never alone when we believe in God, the one who created us and who wants only good for us. We live in a broken world where human frailties abound and over time our physical body naturally grows feeble. And yet, even then, the Holy Spirit resides with us and inside us even as we cannot physically touch the Spirit. The Spirit is our comforter, our advocate.

The Lord is our keeper and the one who watches over our going out and our coming in. The Lord is the one who has walked before us, into death and into eternal life. Therefore, do not be afraid. Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us. Among the most radical sayings of Jesus is this: that God has a warm and welcoming place for each and every one of us. And with Carol there now, I suspect many of those places may have a few collectibles and a warm throw draped over the back of an easy chair with a book you might like on the side table.

God has prepared a place for Carol and she rests, now, neither in pain or confusion, secure in the love and knowledge of God. For which we all give thanks. Amen.