

EULOGY FOR THERESA PEASE MCKINNEY (written by Rick McKinney 10/02/2016)

My name is Father Ron McKinney from Scranton, Pennsylvania. I am Theresa's brother-in-law and her husband, Rick, is my twin brother. On behalf of the family I would like to thank everyone who came here today especially those who came from some distance away as well as those who are serving here today as priests, deacons, music ministers and other roles. I also want to thank all those who reached out to Theresa these past few months while she was in the hospital with your cards, your calls, your gifts, your visits, and your prayers. I especially want to thank Father Joe Rogers and Father Dave Wells for their service here today and for their prayers and visits to Theresa, which Rick tells me were especially supportive to her, as well as those in the Catholic chaplaincy at the Washington Hospital Center. Thank you all so very much.

It is my privilege now to read to you the eulogy that Theresa's husband prepared.

Theresa was born six weeks prematurely on August 25, 1950, and my brother and I were born at the end of September in 1950. So he and Theresa always had an ongoing debate as to who was actually the older spouse. Theresa was the first of four children by Ralph and Jean Pease of Bethesda, Maryland. It was a difficult pregnancy for her mother and after Theresa was born the doctor told her parents that there was very little hope for her survival as her lungs were not expanding and her birth weight was very low, but her mother, even before she was born, began to ask St. Theresa of Lisieux, also known as St. Theresa of the Little Flower, to intercede with God on her baby's behalf and miraculously Theresa survived and the doctor referred to her as his "miracle baby." In gratitude her parents named her Theresa after St. Theresa of the Little Flower.

Theresa, however, was born with certain difficulties. Her toes would not lie flat and she had missing thumb muscles in both her hands. Thus she had poor balance, had difficulty walking, had difficulty opening things, and unfortunately was made fun of by other children. As a child she had to have numerous foot operations and one of her toes was removed. To help strengthen her hands her parents provided piano and typing lessons. The typing skills came in real handy later on when she became a secretary for various units of the Federal government. She also typed up many a

paper for students in their graduate studies, especially for her fiancée, Rick, and for many others, some of whom are probably in this church today.

Theresa's first memory was when her brother, Ralph, was born and she was about two and a half years old. She dearly wanted a sister, so instead of calling him Ralph, she would call him "Nancy." Somehow though, despite her best efforts, the name "Nancy" never stuck.

When Theresa was twelve years old she finally did get a sister named Tina, and then she got another sibling a year later named Joe. Her mother gave to Theresa much of the child care responsibilities like feeding, dressing, changing, bathing, holding, and taking care of them. Theresa, also, at this time, became a much sought after baby sitter. When her parents would go out for bowling or another event and Theresa was left in charge she was told not to give her siblings any snacks. But much to their delight she would occasionally prepare them biscuits and she told Tina and Joe that the warm item they were eating was called "nothing." So when her mother asked them if they were served anything to eat they told her that Theresa gave them "nothing." This past week the family has heard stories about how Theresa mentored various young girls in the art of baby sitting and was also there for them when things got difficult.

Theresa's parents had enrolled she and her brother at their parish's Catholic School, Little Flower in Bethesda, where she also received all her sacraments, but in high school, after the death of one of her friend's parents, she sought God more earnestly and she said she read many spiritual and theological works. Around that time one of her friends invited her to a breakfast club for high schoolers at Fourth Presbyterian Church, a large evangelical church in Bethesda. She was very intrigued for seemingly, unlike the Catholic youth she knew these young people there all talked about having an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. So one evening she also asked God for that kind of relationship and she said she has been talking to God intimately and placing herself in his care ever since. After graduating from high school Theresa then became a member of that church and started attending their large college fellowship, which is also where she first met her future husband, Rick.

Over a period of some seven years Theresa worked for the U.S. government as a secretary and also worked her way through Montgomery Community College and then the University of Maryland where she graduated with a degree in English in 1975.

However, it was in the Spring of 1973, while at the University of Maryland, that one of her friends invited her to the University chapel for a prayer meeting of a small ecumenical group, who called themselves the Charismatic Christian Fellowship, where Catholics and Protestants worshiped together in vibrant praise of God and talked about being baptized in the Holy Spirit. That group also attended a much larger charismatic prayer meeting which met weekly at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Her future husband, Rick, was a member of that small fellowship group. He was on his own spiritual journey and that semester she witnessed his confirmation into the Catholic Church, held at the Catholic Student Center, just off campus in College Park.

In the Spring of 1974, by going to confession, Theresa herself made a journey back to the Catholic Church for she realized that there were many Catholics, young and old, that she knew had vital, personal relationships with Jesus Christ, and she decided she wanted to be that kind of Catholic as well.

Not long afterwards, she and Rick began dating and soon they both started to feel, "this is the one I want to marry and this is one I think God wants me to marry." When Rick finally popped the question she said that her answer would be yes, but first he had to ask her father, Ralph Pease, who she greatly respected, for her hand in marriage. So Rick did ask her father and he gave his permission, and Theresa made certain her own daughters knew this story so that when it came time for their own betrothal they would know how a proper engagement was to begin, which, by the way, there intended ones followed. So on September 20, 1975, Theresa married Rick, the love of her life, at her parent's church in Bethesda.

In their first year of marriage, they lived in Adelphi, Maryland. At that time Theresa was working as a secretary for the Federal government and Rick, with a new Master's Degree in Library Science, found a job as a librarian at a non-profit organization and eventually he became a law librarian at the Federal Reserve Board

in Washington, D.C. They attended the nearby St. Camillus Catholic Church. However, they grew hungry for a more intense community lifestyle and eventually discerned a calling to the Mother of God Community, a Catholic and ecumenical charismatic community which was then beginning to take more concrete shape, with many members moving to the town houses and apartments of Montgomery Village, Maryland. Theresa and Rick also moved there in 1976, joining the Community. The Mother of God School across street from here, which Theresa helped establish, is an outgrowth of that community.

Theresa and Rick were childless for a number of years, but after some visits to the obstetrician as well as priestly blessings and prayerful laying on of hands by members of the Community, in 1981 God blessed them with their first child, Joann, which means "God is gracious." Their daughter Mary was born in 1984 and she was one of the first infants to be baptized in the new church building here at St. John Neumann.

Theresa loved being a mother and had had lots of previous experience as a babysitter. One thing she did when her daughters were young was to prep them whenever their Daddy was soon coming home from work. She would say, "Daddy's coming home. Daddy's coming home," so that when he did come through the door, they literally mobbed him with excitement, and he loved it.

{*Theresa and Rick were early and active participants at St. John Neumann Catholic Church, which back in the late 70's and early 80's was a new parish. Masses were first held in a local theater and then in a local elementary school. Rick and Theresa were founding members of the Church and by making a sizable contribution themselves and by going into member homes requesting pledges, they helped to build this church structure where we are now gathered. Their names are even on the plaque of early donors in the hallway opposite the adoration chapel.}*

{*Over the years Theresa served at St. John Neumann in a variety of roles*(, which Father Dave has already related)" including that of being member of the choir, church office volunteer, women's ministry leader, catechist for fourth and fifth graders, licensed cooking supervisor, registrant for the church photo directory, member of the parish advisory council, sponsor for new initiates in the RCIA

program, or Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, member of the Vocations Society, and other activities*}. She also continued as an active member of the Mother of God Community, often doing the planning for the Community's annual Holy Thursday Seder dinner or being the registrar for various Community sponsored events and conferences. Over the years she served on the Mother of God School Board as well as the Board of two homeowners associations, the Board of a Christian mental health organization, and had been a Girl Scout leader as well.

When her children were real young, to provide extra income, she became a certified child care worker in her own home. At other times Theresa worked outside the home for many organizations, largely doing administrative work, including employment at the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Cancer Institute, an accounting firm, a medical dictation service, an insurance company , and even as a secretary at the Gaithersburg Church of the Nazarene, which is kiddie corner from us here.

She did all this and still had enough time to be a wife, mother, and homemaker. She even became a second mother to many of her two daughters' friends who often called her Mom or referred to her as their second Mom, and still do.

All these were works of love Theresa was able to do despite various personal illnesses that began to develop within her and that she had to learn to persevere through them in faith or learn to live with them in faith. These illnesses, which sometimes required hospitalization, included things like cancer, serious infections, depression, heart failure, diabetes, kidney failure, loss of mobility, pressure ulcers, intestinal bleeding and many other ailments. During her last hospitalization, which was at Washington Hospital Center, after undergoing a double by-pass heart operation in early July of this year, multiple complications occurred during a nearly three month period which eventually led to her death.

Through all these torments she would often unite her sufferings with Christ's sufferings on the cross and ask that they might act as a prayer for those who needed it most, especially for unwanted infants still in the womb of their mothers. During the last 24 hours of her life Theresa related how she had had a dream about going home and she pointed skyward. She said she had had enough and no longer wanted

food or to be repositioned from side to side or any other treatments, but for the sake of and out of love for her family and friends, who visited her later that day, she ate the little she could get down, and even that was painful to her. She submitted to being repositioned every two hours and she underwent dialysis treatment. Her daughter, Mary, stayed with her most of her last night until Theresa finally fell asleep around 2:00 a.m. She said that her mother prayed for the Holy Spirit to come and take her, which was answered later that morning while she was reportedly resting comfortably. Theresa knew her time was close but her family did not want to hear it.

Theresa was an extrovert and loved to be around people. When it became difficult for her to get out of the house she found many old friends and many new friends via Facebook or various Christian support groups she had joined. Since her death Theresa's family has heard many stories of people, they often didn't know, who said that Theresa inspired them or gave encouraging words to them on the phone or on the Internet.

Theresa parents, Ralph and Jean Pease along with her siblings, moved to Clearwater, Florida a couple of years after she was married, but she remained close to them and she and her husband would often take a family vacation down to see them. She became particularly close to her mother after her father suffered a stroke while they were vacationing in North Carolina and Rick and Theresa just happened to be there then. Ralph was hospitalized in that state and for many weeks she and her mother were at his side, day after day, while a new kindred spirit and respect was born between them.

{In the last few years, both Theresa's parents have passed on, but Theresa shared many of their characteristics. For instance, like her father, she was a careful planner whether in buying groceries, planning an event, planning a vacation, and so on. Her father also gathered items in his travels. For Theresa it was buying local coffee mugs in whatever city she and her husband visited whenever they vacationed or went to one of Rick's professional conferences together. Theresa loved coffee but she seldom drank it in recent years as it was not in keeping with a renal diet. Rick would generally only drink coffee on long road trips to keep awake and Theresa took those

opportunities and others to read aloud certain books together. So together they read the Narnia series, the works of John Grisham, the Harry Potter series, and others. Her favorite destination was the beach and that might be because that's where her family use to vacation when she was young. Theresa and Rick had hoped to go to Ocean City this past summer, but God had other plans for them.} *

Another Theresa characteristic was that she could not hide her feelings, for she wore them on her face. If she was disturbed or in pain you knew it without a word, especially in her eye brows, but when she smiled it lit up the room, and for some strange reason, unlike her daughters, she actually thought that most of her husband's jokes and play on words, were funny, and she would smile broadly.

When Theresa and Rick prayed together they would often pray in alternate responses. For instance he would say "Our Father" and she would respond "who art in heaven" and so on until the end of the prayer. They even did that at mealtime prayers for they found that it helped them pay more than routine attention to what was being said and it also helped build them up together in faith and prayer.

Rick and Theresa celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary two days before she passed on and he brought to the hospital a carefully chosen anniversary card as well as take out from the Red Lobster, which was her favorite restaurant, but she was only able to eat a few small bites of shrimp. On the day she died Rick was supposed to receive a lifetime achievement award from the local law librarians' society he was member of. He sent his regrets and some remarks to be read for he did not feel like being congratulated on that day and more especially he knew that regardless of any accomplishments he may have had, the great task and privileged calling of his life was to love his wife and he questioned whether he had done enough, prayed enough or advocated enough on her behalf even though for nearly three months he drove some 45 minutes to the hospital almost every day to visit her. However, he came to see during this past week that Theresa knew she was loved by God, by her husband, by her family, and by her friends and she knew she loved them and told them so; and that, he recognized, is enough for any life that is well lived.

Deacon Mike Davy of this parish, who read the Gospel today, had a special name he would call Theresa. He and his wife K.C. have been friends of the McKinney's for some 40 years and the McKinney's are godparents to their daughter, Grace, and the Davy's are godparents to the McKinney's daughter, Mary. Deacon Mike frequently referred to Theresa as "Saint Theresa" or might ask, "How is the Little Flower?" Sometimes Rick thought to himself that his wife may not have deserved the title "saint," but he came to realize toward the end of Theresa's life that through the crucible of suffering in faith, Theresa had in many ways become saint-like.

If you place a caterpillar in the palm of a child's hand and tell the child that the caterpillar was designed to be transformed into a butterfly, a beautiful creature with wings, that child might find it hard to believe. So too, we might find it hard to believe that our earthy bodies are designed to be transformed into a heavenly one, perhaps one with wings. Let us pray that Theresa, who loved much and suffered much in this life, shall find herself transformed with the wings of heaven.

Thank you.