

## Eulogy for Aunt Mary

+ August 15th Feast of the Assumption

Over the past several weeks we have consoled one another with the memories of Mary's life, reflecting on what a gift she was to each one of us. Through and through she had a mother's heart, overflowing with love for her family, and her friends.

As I have listened to the stories, I reflected on the impact Aunt Mary made in my life and the lives of so many others. Several key themes were repeated and they won't come as a surprise to anyone who knew her. Her love for people, her love for family, her love for animals, and her love for food.

From a young age Mary's love for people was clear in what her brothers and sister described as an always "sweet playfulness." She reflected the best parts of both Papa and Nana's personalities. She had the ability to love easily, and to draw other people close to her, and to be trusted that she had their best interest at heart. I remember from a young age concluding that Aunt Mary's love was unique. Now, I knew that my Mom and Dad loved me unconditionally, but they had to, they were stuck with me. But Aunt Mary's love and devotion to me and later to Rebecca and my children was completely undeserved, and she never once, to my knowledge, considered it a burden or a duty, but rather a joy. My experience was echoed in the lives of nearly everyone I spoke to. Mary's love for people was genuine, unconditional, and infectious.

She always sought to find the good in people, even though she was painfully aware and sometimes vocal about their faults. As teenagers, David, Brandon and I, easily shrugged off the criticism of others, but Aunt Mary's disappoint in something we had done, despite our best attempts to dodge it, always hit a little harder. Even when we thought she was wrong, we never doubted that she was motivated by a desire for us to do better. Luckily for us, her disappoint never lasted long, she would always find something good in us, even when we didn't always see it in ourselves. She saw the good in others, not because she was naïve, or overly optimistic, but because she took it as her responsibility to help make them better.

Whether it was her dog walking group, which circled Palm for over 13 years, or Bonnie whom she served for nearly 20 years, Mary found joy in service. Especially when that service required cooking or shopping. Her potato casserole is stuff of legend, her albondigas soup won Uncle Steve over when she brought it to Builders Emporium all those years ago, her brownies were addictive, even before California had legally addictive brownies, her ability to give meaningful gifts put Amazon's algorithm to shame. She knew I needed underwear even before I knew I needed underwear. Brandon, her second favorite son, after her dog Nickona, described it perfectly when he said "getting Mom gifts was so hard, because her hobby was making other people happy." David her second favorite son, after Kathy's dog Bruce, recalled all the hours she

spent driving us around to Atlas United, Swim West, trips to Dana Point and becoming a bigger sports fan than we were, supporting our hobbies and passions regardless of if she actually liked them. She liked those things, because we liked those things. She made them important to her, because they were important to us, and we were important to her.

You can't always judge the impact of one's life based on the way that they passed from it. However, I think that Aunt Mary's life may be a one of those rare exceptions. There, gathered around her as she left this world, were the outcomes of her labor. In the end, a life spent caring for others yielded incredible fruit. For the past two years, we've watched as Uncle Steve her beloved husband of \_\_\_ years, and David and Brandon sought to return all the care and love Mary poured into them, even when it was the most difficult. That kind of devotion does not come easy, it comes from having received it first. Mary modeled a selflessness, a devotion to family, and a love for life that was truly contagious.

As was one other of her distinctive features: Her sense of humor. Whether it was wasting a can of beans making my Dad nauseas in Mojave, or making light of the pain she was in, Aunt Mary never let anything cut her too deeply, not because she sought to avoid the pain, but because she had faith that with God's grace she would get through it, and that humor would help. In my final conversation with her she asked two things from me. One, to not make her eat another bite of the hospital food because it was "the worst part of having cancer" and second not to let my brother Lanz give the eulogy unless Uncle Steve had gone completely deaf.

As I have gotten older, I have realized what a gift Aunt Mary was to our entire family. And she will be deeply missed. However, we have the consolation that she poured out her life in love, and she has the consolation of knowing her love made each one of us better. Until we see her again, let us love as she loved.

*Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9 C5*

A reading from the Book of the prophet Isaiah  
On this mountain the LORD of hosts  
will provide for all peoples.  
On this mountain he will destroy  
the veil that veils all peoples,  
The web that is woven over all nations;  
he will destroy death forever.  
The Lord GOD will wipe away  
the tears from all faces;  
The reproach of his people he will remove  
from the whole earth; for the Lord has spoken.  
On that day it will be said:  
"Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!  
This is the Lord for whom we looked;  
let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"

The Word of the Lord.

*2 Corinthians 4:14-5:1 E9*

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians  
Brothers and sisters:  
We know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus  
will raise us also with Jesus  
and place us with you in his presence.  
Everything indeed is for you,  
so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people  
may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God.  
Therefore, we are not discouraged;  
rather, although our outer self is wasting away,  
our inner self is being renewed day by day.  
For this momentary light affliction  
is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,  
as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen;  
for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.  
For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent,  
should be destroyed,  
we have a building from God,  
a dwelling not made with hands,  
eternal in heaven.

The Word of the Lord.